ANDREI P. TSYGANKOV

The Strong State in Russia

Development and Crisis

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Preface

IN LATE 2011, Russia entered a new political era by leaving behind both the 2000s and the 1990s. More openly than other developments, the political protest in response to the rigged elections to State Duma exemplified a crisis in the country's development. Russia was entering the third stage in its post-communist evolution.

During the 1990s, Russia 1.0 transformed its institutions by eliminating what was left of the Soviet era and laying out foundations of a new system. Among them were privatization, macroeconomic stabilization, the new constitution, continued elections, and the leader's voluntary departure from power. During the 2000s the political pendulum swung back. As the leader of Russia 2.0, Vladimir Putin wanted to strengthen the state while preserving existing foundations for economic development. By integrating prominent members of the security elites within the ruling structure, he helped to unify the previously divided political class. Putin also sought to win people's loyalty by establishing political stability, new economic opportunities, and social services. The middle class now constitutes about 25% of the population, relative to 5% in the 1990s.

Yet the same middle class that Putin sought to develop has challenged his strong state system. In addition, some within the ruling structure grew comfortable with Dmitry Medvedev as president and disliked Putin's decision to return to power. Many in Russia are now dissatisfied with the accomplishments of the Putin era, which include state consolidation, economic recovery, the end of the war in Chechnya, and revival of Russia's international status. The system proved unable to deliver a greater openness, the rule of law, and a renewed economic confidence. Therefore some members of Russian opposition condemn the Putin system itself. Others favor a more open political system, eradication of corruption, and clear rules for business but do not want to go back to the 1990s and support a gradual improvement of the system. Will Russia 3.0 solve the crisis through a reform from the above? Is Putin,

known as a conservative stabilizer, capable of serious steps to improve the system? If not, will Russia go through another revolutionary transformation?

These are among the questions that inspire my overview of Russian politics from its emergence until the contemporary era. In writing it, I have been motivated by two interrelated considerations—one teaching and another scholarly. First, I wanted to assist students who begin to study Russian politics in Western universities. In my experience of teaching since 2000, most texts discuss Russia by applying Western liberal assumptions and providing little of historical and cultural context. More often than not, courses on Russian politics begin with a discussion of the Soviet system and its collapse, as if Russia had no meaningful, centuries-long political experience before communism. In addition, such courses tend to focus on the country's "domestic" politics and neglect the importance of the outside world in forming Russia's political system. I hope that my book, if adopted as a textbook, will compensate for some of these shortcomings.

Although I have written this book with a student audience in mind, I hope that scholars and the general public may find it of interest as well. My second motivation for writing this book is to highlight the potential vitality of culture and history in Russia's political system. Studying Russia by comparing it to other nations is important yet must not turn into what Stephen Cohen once referred to as "Russian studies without Russia." Until Russians themselves stop making sense of their politics by referring to the Times of Trouble (*Smuta*), Dual Power (*dvoyevlastiye*), In-Between-Tsardom (*mezhdutsarstviye*), or other historically meaningful terms, the field of Russian politics is not dead and should not become just a regional branch of comparative politics.

Central to the book is the Russian concept of a strong or highly centralized state (*sil'noye gosudarstvo*), which has roots in the tsar's autocratic rule (*samoderzhaviye*). I make no claims of establishing a novel interpretation of Russia's political issues and dilemmas, let alone showing a way out of the country's contemporary crisis. Rather, I argue that a perspective on Russia from a Western viewpoint is limited and that there has been an alternative way of thinking about the nation and its problems. Today, after the stifling decades of communism, such thinking is slowly being revived inside the country. Russia's strong state has evolved and survived throughout centuries and that alone suggests its historical vitality and possible future revival. The fact that all major intellectual currents in Russia—liberals, socialists, conservatives, and Eurasianists—have historically offered their own distinct versions of a strong state for resolving the country's problems

further suggests its importance. From this perspective, the central scholarly question is not whether Russia will re-create a strong state but, rather, what kind of a strong state it will be and under which circumstances it is likely to function.

The book is organized chronologically, as an overview of five distinct models of Russia's strong state—Kiev principality, Muscovy, the Romanov's empire, Soviet state, and post-Soviet republic—with an emphasis on the last two decades. Throughout the book, I discuss underlying conditions of each of these models' emergence, consolidation, and decline. Among these conditions, I highlight a role played by foreign threats, rising social classes, and leadership. I argue that each time a combination of these conditions was distinct thereby producing different political outcomes in Russia. The contemporary state is increasingly formed by responding to international economic challenges and pressures of the middle class at home. It remains to be seen whether the current leadership's attempts to reform the established system will be successful.

For reactions to the overall project and comments on individual chapters, I would like to thank (in alphabetical order) Tony D'Agostino, Hilary Apel, Boris Barkanov, Sanjoy Banerjee, Alfred Evans, David Foglesong, Julia Godzikovskaya, Dmitry Gorenburg, Henry Hale, Dale Herspring, Alena Ledeneda, David Parker, Peter Rutland, Alexei Shevchenko, Yuri Slezkine, Vlad Sobell, Matthew Tarver-Wahlquist, Pavel Tsygankov, and Igor Zevelev. I am alone responsible for the book's errors.

Parts of several chapters draw on my previously published books *Russia's Foreign Policy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006) and *Russia and the West from Alexander to Putin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). I thank the publishers for permission to use these materials in the book.

At Oxford University Press, I am especially grateful to David McBride for his guidance and faith in the project. Comments and constructive criticisms by anonymous reviewers were important in improving the book.

While finishing the book in the fall 2013, I spent October and November at Aleksanteri Institute, University of Helsinki. I especially thank the staff of the Institute, and particularly Hanna Smith, Toumas Forsberg, Markku Kivinen, and Riikka Palonkorpi for making my stay comfortable and stimulating.

I owe a special debt to my family for their love and support. I dedicate this book to my son Pasha and my wife Julia. Pasha's enthusiasm for history has been infectious and Julia's common sense has helped me to stay "sane" ever since I began to write about the "crazy" subject of Russian politics.

Last but not least, I dedicate this book to my students. Without their questions, support, and enthusiasm, the book could have not been written. I hope that throughout its pages my students will hear the same thick Russian accent that they have heard in my classroom.

In transliterating names from the Russian, I have used "y" to denote "ы," to denote "ь" and "ъ," "yu" to denote "ю," "ya" to denote "я," "i" to denote "й" and "ий," "iyi" to denote double "и," "e" to denote "э," "kh" to denote "х," "zh" to denote "ж," "ts" to denote "ц," "ch" to denote "ч," "sh" to denote "ш," and "sch" to denote "щ." I have also used "Ye" to distinguish the sound of "e" (such as "Yevropa") in the beginning of a word from that in the middle of a word (such as "vneshnei"). Everywhere, I did not distinguish between "e" and "ë." Spelling is retained in quotations.

Introduction

I

Russia from Two Perspectives

The West is not necessarily most alarmed when Russia is in reality most alarming, or most reassured when Russia is in fact most reassuring

MARTIN MALIA[1]

LET US BEGIN by introducing two different perspectives from which to approach Russia—the Westernist and the Nativist. Westernists view Russia through the eyes of members of Western civilization who deem their culture superior to all others. In contrast, Nativists seek to understand Russia from within by highlighting its own cultural and historical experiences. Each of these perspectives is imperfect in its own way.

The Westernist Perspectives

Westernism is not merely a perspective on Russia from a Western point of view but the one that perceives Russia as a culturally, historically, and institutionally inferior nation. Westernism denies Russia an authentic historical path or finds such a path threatening to Western nations' interests and values. Ethnocentric ideas are insensitive to other cultures and are uncomfortable with alternate perspectives. In its extreme form, Westernism replaces analysis with a mirror image projection of the self onto the other. The other is viewed as having nothing of what the self has developed. Whereas the self is deemed civilized, economically developed, and democratic, the other is presented as barbaric, backward, and oppressive. When perspectives from the other demand to be recognized, they are typically dismissed or viewed with fear and suspicion by the self.

An example of Westernism as the mirror image of the Orient is documented in Edward Said's classic work *Orientalism*. Similarly ethnocentric assumptions have shaped the minds of Western scholars ever since Russia emerged as an independent power. By the time that Marquis de Custine wrote

in the 1830s of the country as the "essentially aggressive" nation that "expiates beforehand, by a debasing submission, the design of exercising a tyranny over other nations,"[2] Russia had already been viewed as such by a number of Europeans who had had an opportunity to visit it.[3] Americans too developed their version of a Westernist perception of the country. As demonstrated by historian David Foglesong, since the late 19th century influential circles in the United States viewed Russia as their "dark double"—disrespectful of religious freedoms and property rights.[4] The revolution and the Cold War in the 20th century served to strengthen such perceptions of Russia in the West. Today this perception remains strong, as critics of Russia frequently attack it for not embracing Western institutions and instead for clinging to its own imperial and autocratic traditions.[5]

The Westernist perspective is not uniform and comes in two distinct forms, liberal and conservative. It is not restricted to Western scholarship. Indeed, Russians themselves sometimes hold views that largely correspond with the liberal Westernist perspective.[6] Liberal Westernists view Russia as *institutionally* alien to the West. They direct their criticism not to the Russian people but to their government, which they view as excessively centralized and insensitive to the society. They present respect for individual liberty, property rights, and representative democracy as incompatible with strong government. Progressive and cosmopolitan in its outlook, this school of thought assumes that once Russia improves its government, it will join the West-centered global community of nations and will be fully accepted by it. Indeed, the Russians hardly have a choice not to do so. As Francis Fukuyama once famously expressed, humankind simply ended its institutional evolution by universalizing Western liberal democracy as "the final form of human government."[7] In full compliance with this outlook, liberal Westernists expected Russian reformers such as Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yelstin to take the country closer to the West. Russian conservative leaders, such as Nicholas I or Vladimir Putin, are frequently perceived as taking their country back to its uncivilized past. This linear progressive perception continues to inform much of the world's scholarship on Russia.

Conservative Westernists are critical of Russian *culture*, rather than merely its governing institutions. Unlike their liberal counterparts, conservatives have a greater appreciation for Russia's distinct history and do not have much hope for its transformation in the Western direction. However, they too are ethnocentric in their assumptions because they tend to view the other's cultural difference as threatening the self's values and interests. Conservative Westernist presentations of Russia's culture and history are

frequently one-sided and unbalanced. For example, they depict Russia as an empire that oppresses nationalities, as an autocratic regime that despises citizens' rights, and as a power that is expansionist and disrespectful of existing international rules. Such depictions downplay the country's long record of protecting small nationalities from attacks by outsiders, Russia's recurring efforts to reform its economic and political system, and its attempts to reach out to Western nations. Being skeptical of the country's ability to reform, conservative Westernists are sometimes on the record that they prefer a weak Russia, which they view as less dangerous for the outside world.[8] They too sympathize with Russia's liberal reformers as undermining the country's capacity to cause harm to the West.

The two Westernist perspectives converge in their criticism of Russia's development under Vladimir Putin. "Putin's Russia" is viewed as oppressive, undemocratic, and expansionist. Westernists attack the governing institutions of the country by drawing parallels with Stalinism and assuming the country's possible return to another cycle of state-organized violence. They point to Putin's past experience of serving in the Soviet KGB as evidence of the current regime's involvement in killing independent journalists and spy defectors. They further insist that Russia's ideological outlook is principally anti-Western and expansionist. Diverse developments that are taking place in the country—new efforts to understand Russia's role in history, decisions regarding foreign and homegrown nongovernmental organizations, examples of ethnic violence, and criticisms of American foreign policy—are explained as stemming from the single source of Russia's anti-democratic system. In the eyes of many Westernists, Russia again has become a powerful enemy to contain, not engage, as during the Cold War.[9]

The Nativist Perspectives

The Nativist perspective views Russia's historical and cultural experience as principally distinct from that of Western nations. According to this perspective, Russia has been a unique case since its appearance on the world's map and cannot merely march in lockstep with the West. Russia must be understood from within, that is, through its own experience, rather than by drawing comparisons with development of other nations. As a result of such an approach, Nativists tend to be less critical of Russia's institutions than Westernists. In particular, many Nativists view autocracy (*samoderzhaviye*) as essential to the country's development and not necessarily as internally oppressive or expansionist. In contrast to definitions of autocracy that highlight the system's

dictatorial and totalitarian tendencies, Nativists point to autocracy's ability to overcome partisanship and mobilize resources for long-term development and to the system's compatibility with some elements of democracy.

Although the Nativist perspective tends to be country centered and is implicitly skeptical of comparative, cross-national approaches, it is anything but uniform. In the following chapters, I show that autocracy in Russia was defended by diverse political currents and found support among liberals, Slavophiles, populists, socialists, and Eurasianists alike. These currents disagreed in their vision of the country's identity, state–society relations, and ties with the outside world, yet they often shared an appreciation for autocracy as the requirement for Russia's survival and development. Nativists are united in rejecting the idea of change outside the state and without its patronage. The view is well captured in one of Vladimir Putin's speeches in which he states, "Our state and its institutions have always played an exceptionally important role in the life of the country and its people. For Russians a strong state is not an anomaly that should be gotten rid of. Quite the contrary, they see it as a source and guarantor of order and the initiator and main driving force of any change."[10]

In addition to substantively different ideologies, Russia's supporters of a strong state have differed in their preferences for the country's pace of development. While remaining loyal to a strong state, conservatives and reformers value the institution for their own reasons. Conservative Nativists have been guardians of the status quo, cherishing the system as the main pillar of territorial integrity, stability, security, and the preservation of established social values. In the widely cited expression of Russia's first official historian Nikolai Karamzin, "Autocracy is the Palladium of Russia; on its integrity depends Russia's happiness."[11] In their turn, liberal or reformist Nativists have viewed a strong state as the institution responsible for initiating and implementing socially urgent changes. From Peter the Great to Putin, liberal Nativists have sought to modernize Russia while preserving and developing its state institutions.

The Book's Argument

This book's argument is largely sympathetic to the Nativist perspective with an emphasis on Russia's history as the guide to understanding the country's future. Russia's historical institutions will continue to define its developmental trajectory. Within this trajectory, Russia will continue to borrow from other nations what its political system is able to borrow. Russia has developed historically by comparing its position to those held by other nations, and

to understand its development, cross-national comparisons are not simply helpful; they are necessary. To substantiate this argument, I advance the following three propositions.

First, autocracy is the central construct in Russia's political history. In the country's tumultuous history, many have opposed the principle of autocracy and have worked to dismantle it. In the 16th century, Prince Andrei Kurbski led the opposition from the nobles to the rule of Ivan the Terrible. A century later, opposition came from the Orthodox Church with Patriarch Nikon challenging Tsar Alexei and interfering with his vision of autocracy. Yet, each time autocracy survived, suppressed its critics, and further consolidated its rule. In the 19th century, an entire social class, the intelligentsia, emerged to advocate the revolutionary transformation of Russia. However, when a revolution indeed took place in the early 20th century, the autocratic state did not disappear but rather underwent a major mutation. The Soviet system reproduced parts of the old system in a sharply disfigured form. Religion was replaced with communist ideology and the tsarist state with the rule of the single party. The main principle of autocracy survived again. Finally, Russia's post-Soviet state is in the process of designing a new construction of a strong state, which in some ways is reminiscent of traditional autocracy. Given these remarkable reiterations of the system, it should come as no surprise that the central political debate in Russia's history has been about the optimal forms and parameters of strong government, rather than about its principal merits.

I also argue that in the Russian political context the establishment of a strong government was a rational response. Two circumstances determined Russia's political path as principally differing from that of Western nations: state relationships with the elites and an intense security dilemma. Internally, Russia's alternative centers of power, the nobles, demonstrated their inability to unite even under the formidable threat from the Mongols. When the Russian lands became "gathered" under the auspices of Muskovy's Grand Prince, the nobles lost their former autonomy and ability to serve as an effective opposition to the tsar. By contrast, European states emerged as a result of complex negotiated arrangements among kings, merchants, and feudal lords.[12] The historical roots of the Western concept of power division are in these arrangements.

This internal predicament was exacerbated by Russia's intense external insecurity. Located in the middle of Eurasia, Russia had few natural boundaries and was frequently attacked by outsiders, from the Mongols to Napoleon and Hitler. In response to this strategic situation, the nobility, the Church, and

other autonomous centers of social life yielded further to state centralization. The appreciation for autocracy was so great that soon after being re-created from below following the Time of Troubles, the state displayed new tendencies to suppress potential checks and balances of its power. As European politics was becoming increasingly about accumulating national power, Russia continued its drive to protect itself from future outsiders by strengthening autocracy. The external pressures were largely responsible for the state decision to impose the command system of long-service conscription and to legalize serfdom. This greatly simplified the collection of taxes and military mobilization.

Historically speaking, Russia's autocracy had a rhythm of moving from weakened (Smuta; Time of Troubles, 1584–1613) to consolidated statehood. One may identify several large cycles in the country's political history, each resulting from a combination of external challenges, dynastic crises, and misguided attempts to transform the system. Both attempts to reform and consolidate the state were rational responses to a historically repetitive set of domestic and international circumstances.

To argue that an autocratic response was rational is not to justify any policy by Russia's autocrats as optimal. Autocratic systems and autocratic rulers in the country varied greatly. Some rulers were not at all effective. They neglected the needs for internal development and engaged in risky international adventures. Others, however, used their time wisely by capitalizing on the system's advantages, such as the ability to formulate long-term objectives and mobilize the required social and material resources. The fact that some autocracies and their rulers were less effective is hardly a strong argument against autocracy. Competitive political systems in the West also have their flaws and in practice often imply opaque influences of business lobbies rather than that of the people. Such systems have a tendency to function as oligarchies rather than democracies. Aristotle had already warned of the danger of oligarchical rule resulting from elites' predatory instincts and self-serving behavior.

My final argument concerns Russia's contemporary development. I submit to the reader that the country's post–Soviet era needs to be understood as a crisis of strong state rule. The strong state system is differentiated from the Western-style competitive system by the high degree of power and authority concentrated in the hand of the executive. While Russia has historically relied on strong state rule, it has experienced different strong state models. The traditional autocracy of principalities was different from the Muskovy system. The latter differed with the system established by the Romanovs dynasty. The Romanov autocracy, even in its most centralized form under Peter the Great, was no match to Stalin's totalitarian system. Varying domestic and

international conditions produced strong state systems that suited such conditions the most, yet Russians always reproduced the highly concentrated systems of authority for addressing their historical challenges. Today Russians are also in the process of building a strong state system. While the new system borrows some characteristics from past practices, it responds to new conditions and popular demands and therefore is likely to be historically distinct.

The question remains whether Russia will find a type of strong government that suits the country's economic and social needs while responding to the basic political aspirations of both the elites and the masses. Some powerful international and internal forces are at work against Russia's success. Russian politics remains excessively polarized, with conservatives having little truck with liberals. Conservatives are frequently influenced by nostalgia for the "better old days." They fail to understand that the world is different and that the old autocratic forms based on hereditary or communist principles will no longer work for Russia. In addition, Russian conservatives tend to be excessively protective of the state and fearful of people's participation in politics. Just as often liberals are motivated by a utopian vision according to which Russia will only be able to solve its social and political ills if it follows the West's example of governing institutions. In the meantime, Russia's leadership tends to procrastinate efforts to reform the state and offer a new coherent vision of its political system.

The weight of history is such that Russia may only succeed if it finds an appropriate way of rebuilding the institution of a strong government. Although the new era cannot sustain the old-style autocracy, a strong state remains just as vital for steering the country to a promising developmental path. History teaches us that in the absence of such a state Russia does not adopt a Western-style system but instead enters a new and devastating Smuta. A recovery from another Smuta will be painful and may lead to territorial disintegration of the country. The key dilemma for the country remains how to change while not radically deviating from the historically tested institutional arrangements.

Recommended Sources

For Russia's self-perceptions, see sources in chapter 2.

For Western perspectives on Russia, consult especially Martin Malia, *Russia under Western Eyes: From the Bronze Horseman to the Lenin Mausoleum* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1999);

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For general work on ethnocentrism in international relations, consult Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), and Naeem Inayatullah and David L. Blaney, *International Relations and the Problem of Difference* (London: Routledge, 2004).

2

The Roots of the Russian State: Autocracy

The purpose of "Autocracy" is not to deprive people of natural liberty, but to steer their actions toward the greatest good.

CATHERINE THE GREAT[1]

THE POLITICS OF the Russian state cannot be properly understood without appreciating the significance of autocracy in the nation's political history. Russia's autocratic system went through several distinct stages but also preserved some important elements that have remained salient even in the post–Soviet era.

What Autocracy Is and Is Not

Like other political systems, autocracy is an institutional arrangement that concentrates and distributes human resources in the interests of the common good. All governments must balance citizens' demands for order and security with those of individual and group rights. The difference is that autocracy strikes this balance by relying on a centralized and concentrated authority of the executive rather than checks and balances as in competitive political systems. By establishing a highly concentrated system of power, autocracy does not neglect citizens' rights and freedoms but presents itself as their ultimate guarantor. A comparison to competitive systems highlights the prominent features of autocracy.

Unlike competitive systems, in which popular elections of public officials are regularly held, autocratic leaders are elected by elites. Traditional monarchs may inherit power, but the process can involve complex negotiations within the dynasty if more than one candidate is eligible to assume the duties of a ruler. Other members of the political class may also get involved,

as occurred with the election of the young Mikhail Romanov by a national assembly to end the Time of Troubles.

Autocracies are legitimated by a religious or (quasi)religious ideology. The Russian nobles elected Tsar Mikhail among other contenders in no small part due to the Romanovs' blood relations to the previous Ruriks' dynasty. In the Russian tradition, the tsar had a divine authority to rule, a system that was only broken by the socialist revolution in the 20th century. But even the atheist revolutionary regime sought to construct a coherent Marxist–Leninist ideological vision to assist the rulers in justifying their claims to power. In line with the old religious principle, the new ideology served to demonstrate a state–society unity and a common effort toward a greater social purpose. Connected to the principle of (quasi)religious ideology is the idea of formally controlled information or censorship. By contrast, censorship does not exist in competitive systems, although this does not mean that the state does not try to shape and spin information flows to its advantage.

In the economic area, autocracies preserve control by placing formal constraints on land ownership and labor movement. The institutions of private property and free labor were historically alien to Russia's political system, in which rulers were involved in distributing economic assets and binding labor to the land. Both features are connected to the system of privileges that are practiced by autocratic rulers to expand their base of support. Economic privileges are not to be confused with property rights. Members of the elite are rewarded for good service to the ruler, but the state may take these privileges away from social groups and individuals.[2] People are also rewarded for their loyalty, although not as handsomely as members of the elite. In exchange, the people expect order, decent living conditions, and protection from unfair treatment by local authorities.

Such organization of social and economic life explains why autocracy rarely has an organized opposition to its rule. Autocracy functions as a complex system with multiple advisory councils, and it encounters both support and criticism from various social circles. However, under autocracy voices of dissent do not generally gain organizational momentum. Instead, the system has the discretion to co-opt, ignore, or purge such voices. Although parliament, courts, and various nongovernmental institutions may be established, they refrain from directly challenging the autocrat and his power. In other words, institutions function as advisory councils, not as checks and balances to constrain the ruler.

Autocracy organizes relations with nationalities in an imperial fashion. The Russian autocrat expects political loyalty from the non-Russian nationalities.

In exchange, he pledges to respect their cultural autonomy and does not impose unified standards of citizenship on them. Foreign relations remain fully a state domain. Only the state is in a position to determine which international ties serve the common good. As with critically important internal issues, various social strata and members of the elite may influence the foreign policy making process, but the ultimate decision remains in the hands of the autocrat.

To further clarify and dispel some of the myths about the autocrat system, it may be helpful to define what autocracy is not. In addition to being different from competitive systems, an autocracy is not an oligarchic or totalitarian system, nor is it necessarily expansionist in its foreign policy. Oligarchy is the rule by the few, as opposed to autocracy's rule by one (as derived from the Greek, αὐτός; "self"). Oligarchic systems often lack leadership or a sense of direction and are therefore inherently unstable. Related to the leadership deficit is the lack of support among broad social strata and even a tendency to become isolated from society. By contrast, autocracies emerge with broad social support and a popular mandate to rule.

Autocracy is also not to be confused with totalitarianism. The latter is associated with unlimited control over private and public life. The totalitarian ruler seeks to eliminate all constraints to government—ideological, informational, and institutional—and rule without feedback from the ruled.[3] Although some autocracies may develop totalitarian tendencies, most autocratic systems are respectful of established social and political boundaries. In pre-revolutionary Russia, the Church and the self-governing institutions were established not to interfere with the monarch's duties but to act on them by developing specific, locally sensitive responses. The autocrat, in his turn, had no plans to control the entire life of society but only to serve as the ultimate guarantor of citizens' rights. As Nicholas Petro argues, "In contrast to the prevailing view that nationality and religion served only to prop up the autocracy . . . they constrained the autocracy by emphasizing the monarch's accountability to the popular will and to the Church."[4] Incidents of revolts and instability uncommon for totalitarian systems do take place under autocracies.

Finally, autocracies are frequently defensive and regional in their international policy and not expansionist or revisionist as it is often asserted.[5] Rather than being determined solely by the regime nature, the Kremlin's foreign policy has been strongly shaped by security conditions and actions of outside powers toward Russia. The Russian state acts within the same constraints of an international system that defines the choices of other states. The Russian autocracy therefore has been generally defensive and has sought to play by existing international rules.

Table 2.1 Ten Features of Autocracy Relative to a Competitive System

Autocracy	Competitive System
1. Elite elections	Popular elections
2. (Quasi)religious ideology	Secular ideology
3. Information censorship	Free press
4. Nationalized land	Private property
5. Bound labor	Free labor
6. Privileges	Equal opportunities
7. Intra-elite consultations	Organized opposition
8. Institutions as advisory councils	Checks and balances to constrain the ruler
9. Imperial organization	Nation-state
10. State-driven foreign policy	Socially constrained foreign policy

The Russians developed several perspectives on autocracy and supported it for various reasons. Slavophiles praised it for serving as the ultimate pillar of moral and spiritual values. In the writings of Ivan Kireyevsky, Aleksei Khomyakov, and Vladimir Solovyev, the state–society unity was captured with the term *Sobornost*, which means the highest degree of cooperation on the basis of Orthodox Christian values and not individual self-interest. Nationalists, such as Minister of Education Sergei Uvarov and the tsar's advisor Konstantin Pobedonostsev, insisted on the importance of autocracy for preserving political unity and stability. The former coined the triad of "Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality" to cement support for Nicholas I's regime, and the latter denounced the Western competitive system as hypocritical and unfit for Russia.[6] Liberals, beginning with philosopher Yuri Krizhanich, and prominent historians, such as Vasili Tatishchev and Nikolai Karamzin, saw autocracy as the tool for society's gradual liberation and enlightenment. In the early 20th century, Prime Ministers Sergei Witte and Pyotr Stolypin advocated economic reforms on the basis of autocracy. Even leftist ideologists, while opposing the government, often thought in terms of preserving autocratic institutions. To Alexander Herzen, populists, and social democrats, the strong state was necessary to guarantee social equality and overcome Russia's economic backwardness relative to the West.

Many Russians were therefore in no hurry to abandon autocracy in favor of the Western-style competitive system. Often critical of autocracy's flaws, they remained impressed with its potential to provide vital public goods and sought not to dismantle but to improve the system. Given Russia's historical

predicaments of economic weakness and insecurity, their reliance on autocracy was entirely rational. When effective, the system was able to deliver what was expected of it: security from external threats, internal peace, social justice, economic development, and national dignity. When not effective, the system came under growing pressure from various social and political strata to reform. In the absence of expected reforms, the dissent grew, occasionally threatening to overthrow the ruling class. Other political systems too may be familiar with such destabilizing dynamics.

Autocratic Regimes: Mobilization and Normalization

An autocratic regime should be differentiated from an autocratic system. Whereas the latter stands for a collection of institutions, the former expresses the leader's attitude toward change. Normally, autocracy seeks to reproduce itself by relying on multiple resources such as state centralization, ideological unity, a supportive political culture, natural wealth, and cheap labor. However, autocracies are faced with various historical tasks and are either protected or challenged from outside. In response to an external environment, autocratic rulers act in either normalization or mobilization modes.

The need to mobilize resources comes when the system's survival is at stake. During this time, the ruler feels threatened from inside or outside the country and seeks to consolidate the institutions of autocracy by tightening state control over society, strengthening security institutions, purging disloyal members of the elite, and offering an elaborate system of ideological indoctrination for the people. Such a totalitarian tendency may be accompanied by the demand for more sacrifices from society for the sake of an ideologically defined "victory." The mobilization trend became visible during the rise of Muskovy when Ivan the Great and his grandson Ivan IV laid the foundations of the Russian state by not only defeating the Tatars but also by establishing the ruler's internal sovereignty. Ivan IV was crowned tsar and assumed the supreme authority "equivalent and parallel to those held by former Byzantine caesar and the Tatar khan."[7] He gained independence from the Church by becoming a "divine" ruler and from the nobles by creating an army of his personal security servicemen (*Oprichnina*). Ivan also introduced the first laws restricting the mobility of the peasants.

Other examples of mobilization rulers may include Peter the Great and Joseph Stalin. Although they ruled in different eras, they each sought to consolidate the state by tightening control over both the elite and the people. In an

era of increasingly secular sovereign statehood in Europe, Peter sought to suppress potential checks and balances of his power by imposing a new ideology of state patriotism or loyalty to the state. He further restricted the role of the Church by eliminating the position of Patriarch and introducing the Holy Synod, a council of ten clergymen. Determined to create a strong army, the tsar banned Russian men from joining a monastery before the age of fifty, and he further bound the peasants to the land by imposing a new head tax (*podushnaya podat'*). By the time of European secularization, Russia had already legalized serfdom, which simplified the collection of taxes and military mobilization. Finally, Peter constrained the nobility's rights by introducing a new order of precedence known as the Table of Ranks. The high position of the nobles was now determined by their service to the emperor, not by birth.

The Bolshevik ruler Stalin was determined to consolidate the state after the revolution and the devastating civil war. His rule exemplified the totalitarian evolution of traditional Russian autocracy. Horrific terror against his own people, mass purges against bureaucracy and all those perceived disloyal to the new system, and destruction of many churches in the name of an atheist socialist state were among the methods of Stalin's rule. As extreme as these methods were, they had their partial roots in the tsarist eras of Ivan IV and Peter the Great. Indeed, the appeal of Stalin to nationalism and security from external threats resonated within his party circles because it reflected a culturally accepted pattern of state-imposed modernization earlier practiced by the tsars. As Robert C. Tucker wrote, the Stalinist rural revolution from above and the introduction of collective farming (*kolkhoz*) bore a strong resemblance to serfdom and "was in essence an accelerated repetition of this tsarist developmental pattern."[8] In collective farms (*kolkhozes*), the peasants too were bound to the land. Most of their products could only be sold to the state, and being deprived of internal passports, they had virtually no mobility.

The state mobilization efforts frequently found the necessary support from below. Indeed, external threats encourage elites and the public to pressure the state to create a mobilization strategy. If the threat is intense and real, both elites and the public tend to perceive the mobilization regime as acting to protect their interests and defend them from foreign invasion. In such cases, support for criticisms of the state tend to decline, as the critics join the ranks of the regime's defenders and political centralization consolidates further. When there is a territorial threat, even competitive systems become more centralized.[9] For example, in response to a territorial rivalry with Turkey over Cyprus, Greece became more centralized in the 1950s and 1960s, culminating in military rule for seven years.[10] Armenia and Azerbaijan

showed similar trajectories in the 1990s when they each became more centralized and authoritarian over the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Russia also knew many periods as a normal autocratic regime. Unlike mobilization regimes, normal autocracies do not feel the pressures of survival and operate in a more relaxed gradual fashion. Typically, normalization regimes succeed those of mobilization and may initiate liberalization from the above. Normalization takes place under conditions of relative internal stability and a lack of existential threats. Normal autocracies rely on the earlier established relations with the elite and the people by respecting or even expanding the degree of their autonomy and by refraining from the excessive use of force. Under normal conditions, autocrats are constrained by elites and act not as dictators but as brokers between competing groups within the ruling classes. Indeed, because of the expanding privileges that they grant to the elites, some normal autocracies may look like weak states in terms of their policy effectiveness. Formally or institutionally strong, a normal autocracy may resemble a weak state because its objectives are limited to those of internal peace and stability and do not include those of development. Some examples of normal autocracies include the years that followed the establishment of the Romanov dynasty, the reigns of Elizabeth and Catherine following Peter the Great, of Tsars Alexander II and Nicholas II, and the Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev. Vladimir Putin's strong state also bears resemblance to normal autocracies in terms of liberalization from above and the sought preservation of balance between competing groups in the Kremlin. Each of these regimes brought with them relative prosperity, internal peace, and new privileges for the elites. Ironically, privileges and improved living standards in some cases generated new social expectations and pressures on normal autocratic regimes for greater freedoms and prosperity. Russian violence from below, from revolts to anti-state terrorism, often took place under liberalizing autocracies, paving the way for future political destabilization.

Normal or liberalizing regimes should be also differentiated from moderate and radical reforms. Moderate reformers sought to introduce elements of economic and political modernization while preserving the core of the strong state system. Among Russian statesmen, Prime Ministers Sergei Witte, Pyotr Stolypin, and Vladimir Kokovtsev were committed to gradual, state-controlled modernization in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. During the Soviet era, Vladimir Lenin, Nikolai Bukharin, and Nikita Khrushchev, each in their own way, attempted to introduce reforms while controlling the "commanding heights" of the economy. On the other hand, radical reformers consciously sought to dismantle the institutions of the strong state system.

Russian political history has known several examples of radical reforms. In the beginning of his rule, the young and idealistic Alexander I tried to follow progressive European societies by giving his country a constitution. Another example is the provisional government in the early 20th century, which was formed by members of liberal and socialist parties following the abdication of Nicholas II after the February Revolution of 1917. Finally, Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms, known as Perestroika, also led to a radical transformation of the Soviet type of autocracy.

The State and the Social Classes

No ruler can act alone, and each must cultivate support within both elite and mass circles. The traditional pattern of the Russian state has been to rule in alliance with the people and the Church by constraining the power of the nobility. The Russian state has been fearful of the nobles' desire for independence and their accumulation of resources. To control the nobility, the autocrat has relied on a mixture of coercion and cooptation tactics by punishing the disloyal and rewarding those accepting the tsar's rule. The ultimate objective of the autocrat was to turn the potentially dissenting group into a source of state wealth and prosperity. The nobles were to become a service nobility that assist the ruler in his plans on behalf of the larger society.

The Church and the people constituted the essential pillars of the autocrat's legitimacy and power. The Orthodox or Eastern Christian religion ideologically connected the tsar to the people and served as the moral basis of statehood. Ever since Prince Vladimir selected Christianity for the Russians, the Church decided not only on religious matters but also on the long-term basis for social consensus. Internally, the Church promoted a new type of social relations, arguing against blood revenge and advocating for stable marriage and the humane treatment of the lower classes. In Sergei Platonov's words, "The Church provided the secular society with an example of a better and more humane life, in which both rich and poor could be defended. . . . The Church influenced all sides of [the] social system including political deeds of Princes and private life of each family."[11]

It was also within the Eastern Christian tradition that Russians established the state's duty to provide them, to the extent possible, with decent living conditions. Before Russia embarked on territorial expansion in the 15th century, Russian princes had been guided by elaborate principles of community-based and religious welfare institutions. Rooted in Orthodox Christianity, these institutions included a foremost respect for the land (*zemlya*), the community

of free peasants (*mir*) with the power to decide critical issues and choose a prince (*veche*), and the principle of "mutual responsibility" for helping each other financially. The latter meant that if one household was unable to contribute the required dues and taxes, the others were expected to make up the difference. Introduced in Kievan Rus', the principle was codified in 1649. The voice of the people was viewed, in the words of Patriarch Job, as the "voice of God."[12] Later, with the emergence of serfdom in response to the peasants' accumulated debt to the nobles and the state ban on free migration, many in Russia viewed the system as an emergency, rather than a normal or natural condition.

The principle of autocracy was first introduced not out of considerations of absolute control of Russia's political rights and economic wealth but rather to provide ordinary Russians with a stable opportunity to improve their living conditions and be protected from possible abuses by local authorities and nobles. Such a perspective governed Muscovy and was fully transformed only after the Time of Troubles, especially by Patriarch Nikon's reforms and the absolutist rule of Peter the Great. In response to Nikon's political ambitions, Tsar Alexei I thwarted them and supported changes within the Church, one of which was that "the parishes, formerly democratic in structure, were deprived of independence. The election of the priests was replaced by their nomination by the bishops."[13] The vision of a socially responsible state survived Peter's rule and was later revived in writings of 19th- and 20th-century thinkers.

In addition to its dealings with the Church and the people, the autocrat rules by relying on coercion and develops special relations with the army and coercive institutions including police and security services. Historically, the Russian army has rarely been divided and has almost always been under the control of civilian authorities.[14] This has been accomplished by special training as well as privileges granted to the army and security services by the state. Ideological indoctrination has played an important role as well. The army and coercive agencies were under oath to the leader, and the autocrat was often directly responsible for initiating military/security reform and creating special units subject to his personal control.

Five Historical Systems

The identified aspects of Russian autocracy—Eastern Christianity, a dominant state, communal values, and a defensive foreign policy—have functioned differently throughout the country's long history. The traditional construction associated with the system of principality held the Church as

the embodiment of the idea of the holy Rus' and as the ultimate arbiter in all human disputes. The priest was elected by the people as was the prince. The latter served the people by protecting them against local abuses of power and organizing the defense against Eastern nomadic tribes.

The early modern autocracy emerged in response to the Mongol occupation when the new Russian state began to form around Moscow. Over time, the grand princes of Muskovy assumed "divine" authority and the duties of a nonelected ruler by gradually establishing their autonomy from the nobles and the Church. Since the fall of Byzantium to the Ottomans in the mid-15th century, Russia proclaimed itself to be the Third Rome or the center of Orthodox Christianity worldwide. The state expanded to the west, east, and south by incorporating other Russian principalities; colonizing Volga, Ural, and Siberia; and fighting multiple wars, often on several fronts simultaneously. Russia's taxation system and wealth in exportable goods (e.g., fur, fat, bread, leather, linen, among others) allowed the autocrat to generate sufficient revenue to sustain the rapidly growing state. Having liberated itself from the Mongols, Russia wanted to be recognized by the Roman Empire and establish a mutually beneficial cultural relationship. However, the European rulers viewed the rising eastern state only as a possible military ally and were not prepared to recognize its autonomy. Four centuries after the schism and the subsequent Mongol occupation, Christian Europe no longer saw Russia as one of its own.

As the Russian autocracy entered the modern era in the 17th century, its cultural institutions showed a pronounced tendency to diverge further from those of the West. Although the Western nations were also moving in the direction of political centralization and absolutist rule, Russia under the Romanovs had gone considerably further by transforming its traditional autocratic system. The transformed autocracy was associated increasingly with the state's need for power and a strong military and decreasingly with the state's social obligations. Legalized serfdom, the defeated opposition from the nobles, and the diminished authority of the Church all pointed in the direction of eliminating checks and balances within the political system. As a response to the West's military pressures, Russia's autocratic system now had to modernize based on external developments. While in the West political and economic changes preceded revolutions in military affairs, in Russia it was military needs that led to political changes. Under the ideological triad of "Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality," Russia sought to preserve its institutions at home while acting to defend Orthodox and Slavic people abroad.

In the early 20th century, in response to the First World War and revolutionary changes in Europe, the Russian state underwent a major mutation. The new vision rested on communist ideology, the practice of a single-party state, and the commitment to communist parties and socialist states across the world. An agonizing disruption, rather than a natural phase of Russia's historic statehood, the Soviet system reproduced parts of the old system in a sharply disfigured form. Religion was replaced with communist ideology, the autocratic state with the rule of the single party, and the commitment to co-religionists with that to ideological allies. Yet despite the totalitarian and centralist nature of the Soviet state, citizens were provided with important social and economic rights, and many of them had reasons to be proud of the new system.

Russia's post-Soviet state is in the process of designing a new ideological construction, which incorporates the notions of Russian civilization, revived state dominance, and support for Russian and pro-Russian communities

Table 2.2 Russia's Five Historical Systems

	Traditional	Muscovy	Romanovs	Soviet	Post-Soviet
Leadership	Archbishop, Prince	Tsar	Emperor	Communist Party secretary	President
Leader's selection	Popular vote	Dynastic selection	Dynastic selection	Communist Party elections	Elite selection, popular elections
Ideology	"Holy Rus'"	The Third Rome	Loyalty to the state	Marxism-Leninism	"Russian civilization"
Revenue	Communal taxes	Taxes, state trade	Bound labor, state trade, taxes	Bound labor, state trade, taxes	State trade, taxes
Internal opponents	Other princes	Nobility	Nobility, old believers, free peasants	Shadow entrepreneurs	Oligarchs, middle class
External threats	Eastern nomads, Sweden, Livonia	Poland, Sweden, Lithuania	Sweden, Turkey, France, Britain	Western countries	United States, Islamic terrorism

abroad. The Kremlin ideologists argue that, while being a part of the West, Russia is a culturally distinct democracy with important obligations at home and abroad. Just as during the late Soviet years, the post-Soviet system relies on high energy prices for sustaining its ambitions of a strong, socially responsible state free of internal and international pressures.

Rhythms and Conditions of Change

Strong state systems rise, decline, and fall. Observable indicators of decline include economic stagnation, the emergence of powerful groups not controlled by the autocrat, and the state's inability to guarantee internal order and security from external threats. At least three conditions are responsible for a strong state's crisis: sever external pressures, rising social classes at home, and the leader's inability to generate new policies.

Since its emergence, the Russian autocracy has gone through several distinct stages of development and crisis. After a prolonged period of the principalities' competition for power, the princes succumbed to the rule of the Mongol khans, which Russians often refer to as the Mongol-Tatar Yoke. Mongols established a tributary system that did not principally alter Russian social organization or way of life. By drawing on their traditions, Russian princes gradually mobilized to challenge Mongol rule. The princes consolidated Russian lands and engaged in open resistance. One of the older principalities, Moscow, rose to prominence under Ivan I (Kalita or Money-Bag) who ruled as grand prince from 1325 to 1341. Ivan practiced clever policies of preserving peace with the khans while increasing his influence on Tver, Pskov, Novgorod, and other Russian lands. Ivan's grandson, Prince Dmitri, won a decisive battle against the Tatars at Kulikovo in 1380.

From this stage of land consolidation, Russia reemerged as the Princedom of Muscovy and developed for more than two centuries until it entered a prolonged crisis. The crisis resulted from Ivan IV's involvement in a war with powerful neighbors as well as his policies of terrorizing the local population through a special institution of permanent purge (*Oprichnina*). An extremely gifted ruler who deserves credit for strengthening the state's ability to govern and increasing Russian lands, Ivan IV was also brutal and psychologically unstable. He ended his rule by killing his son Alexei in a rage and exacerbating the already serious instability in the country with a dynastical crisis. The latter found its continuation in a combination of foreign invasion (Poles), power struggles among the nobles, and peasant revolts. Known as the Time of Troubles (Smuta), the crisis ended in fall of the Rurik dynasty. The

mobilization of patriotic peasants, princes, and nobles successfully defeated the Poles in 1612. In 1613 a special assembly of representatives from Russian lands elected Mikhail Romanov as the country's new ruler.

The Romanov dynasty ruled the country for some three centuries, at times successfully and other times not. As before, the Russian state had to deal with powerful external pressures by trying to secure its territorial borders from frequent attacks by outsiders. The invasions of Russia included those by the Poles, Ottomans, and Swedes in the 17th century; by the Swedes, Austrians, and Ottomans in the 18th century; the French, British, and Ottomans in the 19th century; and the Germans (twice) and the Allies in the 20th century.[15] The logic of competition with the most powerful European nations often drove Russia's decisions to wage war, expand its territory, and accept the realities of militarism despite its economic backwardness relative to the West. The price of becoming competitive in military terms ultimately proved too heavy. In the second half of the 19th century and early 20th century, Russia became involved in European competition for power against its old ally Germany—with severe consequences for the state's social welfare obligations. The revolution of 1905 was the first reminder of how internally fragile Russia really was. By the time of the assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand by Serbian nationalist Gavrilo Princip and Austria's declaration of war on Serbia, Russia's ally, Nicholas II had already endorsed a plan to fight Germany and its ally Austria. Russia's participation in the war and its repeated military defeats resulted in the abdication of Nicholas and, ultimately, a new revolution. In October 1917, the Bolsheviks ended the agony of transition by exploiting the conditions of social and political instability in the country.

Yet the new Soviet system proved to be short-lived, lasting only seventy years. As with the previous autocracies, the Soviet system ended its rule from a combination of vulnerability to external pressures and an inability to generate new policies to satisfy rising social classes. The Cold War with the powerful Western countries put a heavy burden on the Soviet leadership. The latter was funding the arms race with petrodollars by delaying economic reforms and gradually losing support of the middle class at home. It was the middle class that produced the gifted Communist Party politician Mikhail Gorbachev. In 1986 Gorbachev came to power to launch his Perestroika reform to revive the system. This time Russia was not at war with anybody. But the proposed reforms were misguided and came late. When Perestroika was introduced, Gorbachev's room to maneuver was severely limited by the wasted time and proliferation of corruption under his predecessors. The Soviet nomenklatura was eager to assume full control for state property by

Table 2.3 Russia's Political Cycles

Development	Crisis	Fall
1. Kiev Rus' (858–1068)	Polovtsians and Mongols attack divided Russian princes (1068–1240)	Mongol occupation (1240–1380)
2. Muskovy (1325–1584)	Wars with Poland and Lithuania (1558–1582)	Dynastical crisis and Smuta (1584–1613)
3. Romanovs (1613–1917)	European power competition (1870–1914)	Terrorism, revolution, and war (1905–1917)
4. The Soviet Union (1917–1991)	Cold War and economic decline (1979–1989)	Soviet collapse (1989–1991)
5. The post-Soviet Russia (1991–)	Global economic and political instability (2008–)	

becoming a new capitalist class. That, along with the nationalist aspirations of non-Russian elites, ended the agony of the system.

The new, post-Soviet Russia is yet to demonstrate its vitality and ability to withstand pressures from the global system. After a painful transition during the 1990s, Russia entered a period of consolidation and then—in response to global economic and political instability—another system's crisis. Powerful political protest, rise of ethnic nationalism, corruption scandals, and growing tensions with the West became manifestations of the crisis. It remains to be seen whether the post-Soviet strong state system will survive the crisis.

The next chapters explore in greater detail how each of these systems developed and fell and whether the new political system in Russia is drawing the right lessons from these systems' development and crises.

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A Brief History

3

Emergence and Development

The task of our internal history has been to enlighten the people's community with the community of the Church. . . . The task of our external history has been to defend political independence of the same ideal not only for Russia, but for all Slavs, and to do so by establishing a strong state that neither replaces, nor constrains the communal ideal.

YURI SAMARIN[1]

Premodern Autocracy (858–1068)

Russia's first autocratic system was a product of complex ethnic, geographic, geopolitical, and religious influences. Ethnically, the Eastern Slavic people, later to be known as Russians, came from the central European region and spoke a distinct language, which they shared with all other Slavs. In Eurasia's vast space and open steppes, Eastern Slavs came in contact with peoples from the east and west and were influenced by their habits, customs, and traditions. Russians intermarried with Finns, Balts, Vikings, Chuds, Khazars, and other incomers from various geographic directions. Yet the Slavic tribes were also forced to defend themselves from nomadic invaders, who were especially active from about AD 200 to the 700s. The invaders came from the northwest (Goths), the east (the Huns and Avars), and southeast (the Khazars), encouraging the Russians to develop and perfect their fighting skills. The harsh and unstable climate of Eurasia fostered cooperation and interdependence among farmers. Even the south of the region was colder than central Europe, which was partly responsible for developing in Russians "a capacity for suffering, a certain communalism, even a willingness to sacrifice the individual for the common good."[2] Finally, since adopting Eastern Christianity in 988, Russians became students of the great Byzantine civilization, which was then at the center of the world's cultural development. In addition to religious

practices and a messianic outlook, Russians learned from Byzantium that the Church's guidance was critically important in ordering internal affairs.

All these influences led to the emergence of a political system that was centralized, egalitarian, and militarist at the same time. A central figure of the system was a prince elected among other princes by an assembly of free voters (the *veche*). The commander of the army (*druzhina*) charged with protecting the land from external invaders, the prince also played an active role in civic affairs. The veche was dominated by male merchants and had an especially prominent administrative and political influence in northern principalities such as Novgorod and Pskov. The veche was less important in Kiev, where the great prince's legitimacy was dynastical. According to the *Primary Chronicle*, in the 800s the Slavic tribes invited a Swedish Viking named Riurik and his two brothers to help establish political order in the land.[3] While the veche had a constraining power, the other institution—the boyars' Duma, made up of high-ranking nobles—served primarily advisory functions.

Another central figure in Novgorod and Pskov was the archbishop. The archbishop was also elected by the veche. He supervised most important administrative matters and had the authority to settle all serious administrative and political disputes. Whenever a conflict between the prince and the "better peoples" (boyars or the merchants) occurred, it was the archbishop's role to resolve it. Even more important, the archbishop provided the ultimate ideological justification of all actions by the state. He provided blessings and the highest ecclesiastic functions in the principality. The Church's influence was also decisive in establishing the Russian legal system. Egalitarian principles of Eastern Christianity were reflected in the first Russian legal code, *Russkaya pravda* (the Russian justice) of the 12th century. The legal system was well developed for its time, with juries, consisting of both boyars and commoners, and mediation procedures.[4] The Church's egalitarian principles also informed the construction of the Russian economy with its norm of collective responsibility for helping those in need.

Revenue was collected through trade and a system of tribute gathering (taxation) designed in Kiev. The latter had a fixed amount of tributes for each administrative unit controlled by the prince's representatives. Depending on a principality's access to commercial routes, it was centered on either agriculture or trade. Trade, especially foreign trade, was more prominent in Kiev, Novgorod, Smolensk, and other principalities located on the Dniepr or Volga, the two largest rivers flowing from the north to south of Russia. The scarcity of capital—a central requirement for economic development—was not yet fully realized, which partly explains why neither the upper nor

lower classes were overtaxed by the princes. Indeed, some sources indicate that in Kiev state taxes were collected exclusively from peasants. The great majority of peasants were free and paid taxes by household, not communally, as it was later established in Moscow Rus'.

With such economically and politically inclusive arrangements, the first autocratic system had few internal opponents and sources of instability. It was a system that was both centralized and democratic, and successfully integrated the military and merchant aristocracy. However, the system failed to establish the right balance in center–periphery relations. Conflicts and disputes were resolved within principalities, but between them the princes, despite common blood, continued to feud for power. What later became known as civil war was common in the age of principalities. The rise and decline of powerful grand princes, such as Vladimir and Yaroslav the Wise, were accompanied by instability. Yaroslav himself came to power by defeating his older brother Svyatopolk, who was responsible for assassinating his other three brothers, Svyatoslav, Boris, and Gleb. Yaroslav ruled from 1019 to 1054 and was generally considered a highly successful and virtuous prince. Yet even well into his reign Yaroslav had to negotiate peace and the division of power among principalities and at one point had to flee Kiev. Yaroslav, sometimes credited as the founding father of the Russian state, devised the flawed succession system of appanage (the *udely*). The system allowed a prince to divide his principality among his sons, thereby encouraging an even greater division of the land of Russia. The Russian historian Mikhail Pogodin calculated that of the 170 years following the death of Yaroslav, 80 witnessed civil war.[5]

The system also faced powerful external enemies in the eastern nomads. Surrounded by the steppes' competitors—the Bulgars, Khazars, Pechenegs, and Polovtsy—Russian princes needed unity above all else. Yet they could not cease their self-destructive competition even when presented with an outside threat. As a chronicler asked, "Why do we ruin the land of Russia by continual strife against each other?" After the death of Vladimir Monomakh in 1125, the Polovtsy, a Turkish people, proved an especially formidable enemy. By then they had defeated the Pechenegs and emerged dominant in the Eurasian steppes to the south of Russia. Rather than seeking unity, Russian princes frequently used the nomads in their quarrels. For instance, in 1094 the prince Oleg Svyatoslavovich fought Vladimir Monomakh jointly with the Polovsty. After Monomakh's death, Yuri Dolgoruky on several occasions used the Polotvsy while challenging for Kiev.

An even more powerful enemy were the Mongols. In 1223, the Mongols defeated the Russians and Polovtsy on the Don and the Kalka and then

retreated back to the Eurasian steppes. In 1237–1240 the Mongols returned and delivered a decisive blow to the Russians by burning Kiev and other major cities. The Mongols politically subjugated Russian princes and imposed upon them a heavy tributary system. The Polovtsy, who learned to coexist peacefully with Russians after 1190, ceased to exist as a unified people by merging with the population of the Mongol khanate or the Golden Horde. The Russians began to liberate themselves only after defeating the Mongols in the Battle of Kulikovo in 1380, but the khanate's domination over important parts of Rus lasted until a century later. The Russian civil wars therefore inevitably led to foreign occupation.

In addition to the nomads, the Russians faced threats from the West. In 1240—about the time of the Mongol invasion—the most prominent invasion attempt came from the Swedish army and German knights. Novgorod's prince Alexander defeated Swedes on the Neva River, and two years later he emerged victorious from the Battle of the Ice against the Teutonic Knights. These victories were essential for preventing further invasions of northern Russia from the West, which began with Swedish attempts to assume control over the commercially important Gulf of Finland in the 12th century. Along the way and while facing an equally powerful threat from the Golden Horde, Alexander made a peace deal with the nomads—possibly out of fear for Russia's culture and religion. So friendly was the prince with the Mongols that he successfully negotiated exemptions for Russians from fighting beside the Golden Horde and was granted the title of grand prince of Vladimir.

The impact of the Mongols on Russia continues to be debated by scholars. Westernist accounts tend to blame Mongols or Tatars (in Russian sources) for many things that went wrong in Russia, including its economic backwardness and cultural isolation from Europe. Russians themselves, beginning with Nikolai Karamzin, promoted the theory of Mongols-Tatars' responsibility (the *yoke*), thereby downplaying Russia's own weakness and divisiveness. The struggle for power among Russian princes was indeed an essential reality that did not disappear even under the Mongols. The princes competed for special privileges and titles, while the Mongols relied on patronage for their own political purposes. But the Westernist approach is wrong for another reason: the Mongols were not the main reason for Russia's backwardness. In terms of trade expansion, military technology, and administrative skills, the Mongols were more advanced than their northern neighbors. Besides, except for the fiscal burden, the Golden Horde did not interfere with the Russian style of living and did not take away the Christian roots of their ideology. This helped to cement what one historian labeled the "ideological silence"

or the "tradition of the medieval ethno-religious frontier." According to the tradition, "the realities of profitable cooperation with unbelievers were not allowed to impinge upon religious ideology,"[6] and that allowed Russians to preserve their spiritual independence by sparing them the ideological crisis of external defeat.

Russians were able to survive the Mongol system in part because the system was less intrusive[7] than it is often depicted and in part because the Russian princes pragmatically used the time for consolidating their institutional development. The Church emerged as essential in creating the foundations for a Russian revival. Under the Mongols, it greatly expanded its influence and wealth due to generous gifts from nobles, merchants, and landowners. The revival began away from Kiev—in Muskovy or the princedom of Moscow. Already in 1325—fifty-five years before the Battle of Kulikovo—Metropolitan Pyotr of Kiev moved his seat to Moscow at the invitation of the local prince, Ivan Kalita. The Russians were beginning to learn from their mistakes.

The Early Modern Autocracy (1325–1584)

After the arrival to power of the Moscow prince Ivan I (Kalita), a new autocratic system slowly began to emerge. The Moscow principality was positioning itself as the center of Russian consolidation. Ivan I established a strong rapport with the Golden Horde and was granted the title of Grand Prince of Vladimir, with the right to collect taxes from all Russian principalities. As the Mongols made him a point man for collecting the tribute, Ivan used his power and wealth to increase influence on the neighboring lands. Through policies of loans and purchases he became the "gatherer of the Russian lands" by annexing them or allowing the local princes to rule on his behalf. Moscow's strategic position—remote from dangerous borders and close to important trade routes, particularly one from Novgorod to the Volga River—made it easier to consolidate its wealth and influence. Already under the Mongols, Russia was entering the stage of early modern centralization of government. After the victorious Battle at Kulikovo in 1380, Moscow became especially assertive in efforts to win control over Russian Orthodox subjects from the Mongols, on the one hand, and Poland, on the other. By 1480 the new Russian rulers expanded to control Novgorod, Pskov, and other principalities. In 1514 they brought Smolensk into Moscow's orbit and then conquered Kazan, Astrakhan, and Siberia. By the mid-15th century the new system was fully consolidated.

Unlike in the Russia of principalities, Moscow's leader—the grand prince and then the tsar—was not elected by a popular vote. Instead, the system practiced a dynastical selection within a narrow circle of the family elites. As the ruling prince was consolidating power in his hands, the veche was gradually abolished. Princes passed the throne to their sons—first with the Mongols' sanction and, after Dmitri Donskoi's victory in the Battle of Kulikovo, without such sanction. By "gathering" the neighboring lands under its control, Moscow also demanded to be recognized by others. Ivan III (the Great, ruled 1462–1505) was especially successful in expanding his principality. Under his rule, the territory of the Moscow state tripled in size, and he was the first to adopt the title of tsar and "Ruler of all Rus'."

The process of internal consolidation was accompanied by the tsar's not only gradually abolishing the veche but also gaining control over other potential sources of opposition to his power. Among them, the Church and nobility were especially important. Although the Church did not directly challenge the prince's power, influential members of the religious circles promoted their own idea of Russia's political system. In the early 16th century, monk Joseph Volotsky of the Volokolamsk Monastery emerged as especially influential among those defending the caesaropapist ideology of the tsar's ruling on behalf of the Church as God's direct representative on Earth. The tsar was a "man in essence, but his power is that of God." He therefore was to comply with Church rules, and his main responsibility was before the Christian Church.

The idea of caesaropapism or theocracy emerged in the context of the fall of Byzantium to the Ottomans in 1453. As a Christian power, Russia has had a distinct religious tradition to defend in the world. By converting to Christianity, Russia established its togetherness with Western—at the time, Byzantine—civilization. However, in less than a century the Russian rulers had to take a side in the schism between Orthodoxy and the Catholic West. Two centuries of Mongol domination added to Russia's traumatic experience. When in 1453 the Ottomans conquered Byzantium, Russia found itself standing alone between Islam and Catholic Europe. To signal to the Holy Roman Empire its cultural autonomy, the grand prince of Moscow Ivan III rejected the idea of accepting the Catholic empire's superiority and famously signed his written answer to the emperor with the title "Great Ruler of all of Rus' by God's grace."[8] He later married Sophia Paleologue, a niece of the last Byzantine Emperor Constantine IX, to become the heir of the fallen Eastern Roman Empire. Some forty years later, the idea of cultural autonomy crystallized in the notion of Muscovy as the Third Rome.

By accepting the ideology of the Third Rome, the tsar, however, did not want to become fully dependent on the Church. He needed the "divine" authority for his own purposes, which included building a powerful centralized state. The latter required obedience and political loyalty, not only Christian faith. As argued by a state ideologist Ivan Peresvetov, the main rationale behind the tsar's action must be justice (*pravda*), which is above force and even above faith. The Church was therefore to become a partner, but only a distinctly secondary one, in ruling Russia.

As to the nobles, they preserved their hereditary status and articulated their views through the boyars' Duma—the advisory institution that had existed since Kiev. Under Ivan IV (known as Grozny or Fearsome and more famously translated as "The Terrible," ruled 1530–1584), the noble Andrei Kurbskiy even argued that the tsar must act on the Duma's opinion, thereby proposing to move toward a Russian equivalent of checks and balances within the system.[9] Moscow's system, however, was progressing in the opposite direction. Ivan IV moved to consolidate his independence from the nobles by creating a class of security servicemen dependent on him and loyal to him personally. By so doing, he also gained considerable control over economic resources. Originally independent land owners, princes now had to submit to land appropriations from the tsar. The system was called *oprichnina*, which consisted of a separate territory in the north of Russia.[10] *Oprichniks*, or members of the newly established security class, received special economic and political privileges and were the main tool in executing the tsar's plans.

Oprichnina was only partly helpful in raising state revenue. The other tool was increased taxes on the peasants. As the Moscow system progressed, peasants began to lose their right to move from one land to another. In the mid-15th century, partly in response to their accumulated debts, the state limited peasants' ability to leave their land to one week a year. Ivan IV also made the peasant commune collectively responsible for paying taxes (*krugovaya poruka*). He further imposed a state tax on liquor, which became legal to sell only in special liquor houses (the *kabaks*). Externally, the state profited from territorial expansion and foreign trade. Conquests of Kazan, Astrakhan, and especially Siberia, with its wealth in furs and other resources, helped to generate revenue, as the state was beginning to assume control over foreign trade. Ivan, who was especially interested in close military ties with England, opened the White Sea and the port of Arkhangelsk for English traders. A special company was established in 1555 and remained the monopoly in bilateral trade until 1698.

The main drivers responsible for the decline of the traditional system of principalities and its transition to early modern autocracy were both internal and external in nature. Internally, Russia's selfish elites bore a special responsibility for making their lands vulnurable to invasions by not consolidating them earlier. This political weakness was accompanied by a relatively unsophisticated army, which relied more on conscription and bravery than on skills and technology. Defeated once by the Viking longships, the Russians were later defeated by the Mongols with their mastery of cavalry, organization, and disciplined training. The Mongols possessed superior military skills and often won battles against significantly larger armies. Relative to most formidable opponents to the east and west, the Russians were weak, unsophisticated, and poorly organized. As the Russians turned to centralizing their state, they remained especially wary of their vulnerability to geopolitical pressures. The fall of Byzantium, Russia's spiritual benefactor, served powerfully to reinforce the wisdom of developing military capabilities. Russia's largest territorial expansion began soon after Byzantium's collapse and is best understood as a reflection of the Moscow princes' insecurity complex. Located in the middle of Eurasia, Russia had few natural boundaries and was a geopolitically insecure state. In an uncertain and often volatile external environment, the country was frequently attacked by outsiders and became preoccupied with defending its borders.

In addition to the Mongols, Russia had to be prepared to confront powerful enemies in the West, including Sweden, Livonia, Lithuania, and Poland. Indeed, since the decline of the Golden Horde, the European states emerged bent on domination in Eurasia. Since the days of Louis XIV, the rules of European great power politics often encouraged rather than constrained instincts of territorial expansion and war. As Dominic Lieven wrote, "In the European system all great powers were bent on increasing their strength in order to secure their interests in an extremely ruthless and competitive world."[11] Europe also emerged as the technologically superior enemy. After liberating itself from the Mongol occupation, Muskovy had been in a generally favorable strategic situation until a revolution of military technology took place in Europe. Gunpowder and techniques in drilling the soldiers provided European armies with more disciplined and better-armed troops, and Russia had to rise to the challenge. The state could no longer afford to share the clerical authorities' position on gunpowder as spiritually harmful.[12] Autocracy also had to be transformed to comply with the imperatives of military modernization, for the likely alternative was the colonization of Russia by Western powers, following the fate of others such as China and India.

Russia's political choice to develop a more consolidated autocratic system was therefore shaped by the miserable historical experience with the Mongols and the possibility of repeating it with the Europeans.

To survive as a political entity, Russia could, of course, enter an alliance with stronger powers. Moscow princes worked hard to be recognized by European states, especially given their Christian roots. Having liberated itself from the Mongols, Muscovy wanted to be recognized by the Roman Empire and establish a mutually beneficial cultural relationship. The moment seemed politically favorable, for Europe felt threatened by the powerful Ottomans and needed Russia's support. However, although the European rulers viewed Russia as a possible military ally, they were not prepared to recognize its autonomy. It was not Ivan III's intention for his decisions to marry to Sophia Paleologue and, later, to open the first Russian embassy in Rome to be taken by the Holy Roman Empire as signs of his readiness to accept Rome's superiority. The four centuries following the schism and the subsequent Mongol domination separated Russia and Europe by a powerful wall of misunderstanding. Europe no longer saw Russia as one of its own. The latter continued to depend on European acceptance, but was not prepared to sacrifice its distinct Orthodox identity and recently gained political sovereignty. As far as Russia was concerned, any alliance with European states had to be on equal terms.

The grim reality of insecurity, while underscoring the importance of political independence, made it difficult for Russia to act on its internal obligations. The new autocracy in Muscovy increasingly stressed the need for a powerful state, thereby diminishing the authority of the Church, undermining the opposition from the nobles, and constraining the movement of labor. Russia's state-building institutions moved toward centralization at the expense of the spiritual freedom and strong social policies once practiced widely in the Russia of principalities. Russia now had to learn how to modernize in response to outside geopolitical pressures, rather than internal needs.

As a result, Russia's internal institutions had to develop in their own distinct direction and diverge from those of the West. This process became especially visible under the second half of Ivan IV's rule with development of the oprichnina and the elimination of opposition to it from both the nobles and the Church. In the late 16th century, Europeans were centralizing their states as well but from a feudal base and by way of finding a compromise between military and commercial elites. Russia followed this trend but went much further by turning the tsar into a dominant figure barely constrained by formal rules and regulations.

These considerations of rising Europe and international power competition shed light on the often-debated question of the Russian tsars' personal responsibility for diverting Russia from a Western path. In Russia a whole school of thought emerged to argue that the country's essentially European identity was first hijacked by the Mongols and then abandoned by the princes of Muskovy. Among them, Ivan IV—a psychologically unstable and sadistically inclined tsar who killed his own son—bears a special responsibility. This theory has gained popularity in the contemporary Russia. For instance, a highly acclaimed film, *The Tsar*, released in Russia in 2009, presents the oprichnina's policies of terrorizing prominent nobles and the subsequent descent of Muskovy into a prolonged period of instability, as primarily a reflection of Ivan's paranoid instincts. This interpretation omits from consideration the country's structural predicaments and geopolitical environment.

The crisis of instability or the Smuta (Time of Troubles, 1584–1613) came in response to a rather complex set of circumstances, most of which were structural. Among them were Russia's involvement in a series of prolonged external wars with Poland, Lithuania, Sweden, and the Livonian knights; domestic resistance to political centralization; epidemics of plague; and poor harvests. To understand Russia's political trajectory it is not enough to present Ivan IV as a tyrant responsible for executing nobles and Churchmen. The tsar's confrontation with the elite followed the general pattern of centralization and state-building established by other Moscow princes. The oprichnina, while created by Ivan and carrying the imprint of his violent personality, also strengthened the state financially by raising additional revenue for fighting external wars and helping to dismantle what Russian historian Sergei Platonov called "the boyars' oligarchy."[13] Opposition from Pskov, Tver', and especially Novgorod presented Moscow with a difficult dilemma and was ultimately brutally suppressed. Although the process could have been less bloody and not accompanied by the alienation, let alone murder, of the tsar's loyal servants, state centralization dictated that opposition be transformed into an institution of intra-elite consultations with power concentrated in the tsar's hands. External wars could have been fought with more skill, yet it is not likely that the expanding Russia would have been left alone by powerful Western neighbors. Multiple wars with the Catholic Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth were challenges that Russia accepted to defend its identity as a distinct Orthodox Christian power. Only after adding the eastern Ukraine to its area of domination, Moscow signed the Eternal Peace Treaty with Warsaw in 1686 and even then mainly to turn on another cultural enemy of the Orthodox Christians—the Turks.

It was under these circumstances that a dynastic crisis developed with Ivan IV's sudden death in 1584, leaving the state without a suitable heir. Foreign invasions continued, as did power struggles among the nobles. The Smuta also brought a civil war, with peasants taking up arms against the authorities. The country suffered a horrendous famine and two occupations by the Poles and Lituanians. Russia was ruled by nobles and self-proclaimed tsars, and a legitimate ruler did not emerge until 1613. The Moscow system proved vulnerable to a similar set of pressures that were the undoing of the previous system—foreign invasions accompanied by internal weakness. But this time the country recovered much faster than after the Mongol invasion, largely because the classes supportive of the centralized state had already developed. Blessed by the Church, the state-minded peasants, merchants, city dwellers, and military commanders mobilized to create a new army to resist foreign invaders. After liberating the country, the Russians elected a new ruling dynasty, the Romanovs. A new autocratic system was about to emerge.

The Modern Autocracy and Its Development (1613–1853)

The already identified forces of modernity—the urge for state, military, and administrative centralization—set Russia on the path to developing the institutions designed by the Moscow princes. The European geopolitical pressures and the era of modern warfare left Russia with no choice but to continue strengthening the tsar's power at the expense of other social classes and elite groups. The increasingly centralized system also assisted the country in its economic recovery. Russia recovered from the Time of Troubles by 1630 largely due to the absence of guilds and the state's ability to remove restrictions on urban traders, exploit Siberian resources, and concentrate the labor force around Moscow.[14] This centralization did not eliminate the informally existing constraints on the tsar's power. Although some of these "checks and balances" were weakened, others were preserved and developed anew. For example, the Russian state built a special relationship with its Islamic subjects by learning ways of accommodating their expectations. Overall, the end of the Smuta gave life to a new political system. While building on the Muskovy's institutions, the system developed qualitatively new characteristics—the ideology of state loyalty and empire and a preoccupation with a regionwide geopolitical expansion.

The new system's leadership and its selection was still dynastic—nominating and then crowning a tsar on the basis of blood relations. The first Romanov, Mikhail, was elected by an assembly (the *sobor*) of nobles, clergy,

and merchants, representing various regions of Russia. As the tsar consolidated his power, the sobor lost its autonomy and was only convened for special occasions at the tsar's discretion. The fourth Romanov, Peter the Great, assumed the title of Emperor of All Russia to consolidate his victory over Sweden and elevate Russia to the status of a sovereign power. The dynastical system contained elements of unpredictability and was potentially prone to crises. Regents did not always want to cede power to their legitimate heirs. When there was more than one heir, there were frequent competitions for power. Peter I's power was challenged by his half-sister, Sophia. Catherine the Great deposed her husband, Peter III. Catherine's son Pavel was assassinated by a conspiracy of those who wanted his son, Alexander, to assume the throne.

The first important distinction of the Romanov's system from that of Muskovy concerned the introduction of a new national ideology. In the era of increasingly secular sovereign statehood in Europe, Peter the Great abandoned the religious ideology of the Third Rome and imposed the ideology of state patriotism or loyalty to the state. As European politics was becoming about accumulating national power, religion was increasingly subjugated to the considerations of the state. Europe figured prominently in Russia's thinking by creating the meaningful environment in which Russia's rulers defended their core values. Peter's successors on the throne continued to develop the state–society connection by promoting various national ideas. For example, in the 19th century, Nicholas I attempted to create an "official nationality" by linking citizenship to popular support for the tsar and the Orthodox faith.[15]

As the empire expanded, it became especially important to establish citizenship and loyalty to the crown. The expansion of Russia's borders was no longer restricted to Orthodox Christian lands. In particular, Russia incorporated new southern territories in Central Asia and the Caucasus populated by predominantly Muslim populations. As the challenges arose regarding the integration of culturally diverse groups, the concept of loyalty to the state as an institution, assisted in the process. From the time of Catherine the Great the Russian empire developed special ties with Islam by supporting those Muslim authorities that were willing to submit to the empire's general direction and even served as arbitrator in disputes between Muslims from the Volga River to Central Asia.[16]

Russia's internal institutions remained distinct from those of Europe and progressed further in the direction of undermining sources of autonomous political power outside the state. By the time of European secularization,

Russia had legalized serfdom. The legalization in 1649 came in response to the peasants' accumulated debt to the nobles and the state restrictions on free migration.[17] Although aware of their traditional responsibility for their subjects' freedoms and prosperity, Russian tsars nevertheless continued to increase the level of taxation on the people. Poverty and relative economic backwardness proved an asset in at least two respects: the state was able to defeat opposition from the nobles and impose the command system of long-service conscription. Determined to have no constraints on military mobilization, Peter the Great further banned Russian men from joining a monastery before the age of fifty. From a military standpoint, it was precisely "because Russia was so 'backward,' according to European standards, that it was so powerful."[18] By contrast, in Europe, state centralization was not as pervasive, partly because it required negotiating complex deals among kings, merchants, and feudal lords.[19]

The nobles and the Church also saw their autonomy diminished. After the Table of Ranks imposed by Peter, the nobles could no longer organize to oppose the state's drive for centralization. Rather than claiming their hereditary rights, nobles had to earn their status through service to the state. In addition to creating the Table of Ranks, Peter abolished the boyar Duma and replaced it with a Senate of ten members. The Senate combined legislative, executive, and judicial functions but was directly dependent on the emperor. The position of the Church changed as well. One critical transformation took place under Alexei I, who acted to thwart Patriarch Nikon's political ambitions. The latter proposed changes within the Church to comply with Greek rituals but also sought to revive the old ambition to be the force behind the tsar's rule. Alexei accepted the changes within the Church but rejected Nikon's interference with the state. Alexei's son, Peter, then abolished the position of Patriarch altogether, relegating the Church's role to that of a ministry. Instead of a Patriarch, a council of ten clergymen, the Holy Synod, was created and shared the building with the State Senate.

The centralization of power notwithstanding, Russia's new autocracy preserved the traditionally important informal constraints on the tsar's power. Although institutions such as the Church, Senate, advisors, local governors, and nationalities had no ability to veto the sovereign's decisions, they served as necessary intermediaries between the state and society. The autocrat therefore had access to various viewpoints and could, if he or she was so inclined, act on them. When the state felt no survival pressures, it often extended privileges to its loyal servants and initiated reforms. For example, Elizabeth and Catherine the Great, who ruled through much of the 18th century,

strengthened the nobility. The former allowed the nobles to reduce their service to the state, while the latter freed them from compulsory military duty. In the 19th century, Alexander I moved to transform the Senate into an executive power and planned to create a parliament to have legislative power. Even more far reaching were Alexander II's Great Reforms, which included liberation of the serfs, a weakening of state censorship, and the establishment of local self-governing institutions. The system was therefore centralized yet not devoid of balance. The tsar could not fully control this highly complex country by counting on existing power institutions and interfering only when such interference was deemed necessary.

As with previous systems, St. Petersburg's autocracy evolved in response to powerful threats from abroad. In addition to insisting on its cultural autonomy since declining the offer to join the Holy Roman Empire, Russia demanded political independence. A geopolitically insecure state, Russia was constantly preoccupied with defending its unstable borders and political independence while striving to attain and preserve the international reputation of a great power. Political independence has remained one of Russia's persistent objectives, and the concept of independence has inspired much of Russian geopolitical writing. The same logic of geography determined that Russia become a great power to sustain itself amid strong outside pressures. However, the new system's ambition was no longer primarily defensive. The expansionist behavior of European powers encouraged Russia not only to secure its borders but also to strive to push them outward, including the incorporation of lands not historically populated by Russians. Influenced partly by local realities and partly by the action of Europeans, Russian thinkers believed in the "inevitable logic of geography,"[20] which prescribed their country to expand in different directions by obtaining "natural boundaries." In addition to geopolitical considerations, Russia felt responsible for the livelihood of those co-religionists who resided outside the Russian state, particularly within the Ottoman Empire.

Acting on such thinking, the Russian rulers sought to establish regional rather than global domination. Unlike European powers, which strove to control Asia, Latin America, and Africa, Russia's ambitions were limited to dominating the Eurasian landmass from the Far East to the Balkans and Eastern Europe. By establishing boundaries to the west, Russia then turned to the south. Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, Russia fought multiple wars with Turkey, in part to protect the rights of the millions of Christians within the Turkish empire—more than a third of its population. Competition with the Ottoman Empire became especially intense in the 18th century,

with Peter and his successors' efforts to protect the Balkan Slavs and secure control over the Black Sea. In 1739, Russia defeated Turkey and gained the Black Sea coast through the Treaty of Belgrade. Catherine the Great then fought two other successful wars with Turkey and gained additional control in the areas of Azov, the Crimea, and Odessa. The policy of protecting Slav-Orthodox "brothers" continued in the 19th century when Russia fought Turkey over Greece's independence and even achieved a protectorate over the Orthodox Christians in the Danubian provinces of Moldova and Walachia. The Crimean War was also fought largely over the protection of the Orthodox Christians and the preservation of Russia's control over the Black Sea. Having recovered from this defeat, Russia returned to assertive policies in the Balkans and Asia. The last third of the 19th century saw Russia's successful expansion into much of Central Asia and the Caucasus by thwarting British and Persian ambitions to dominate in the region.

The composition of Russia's foreign enemies changed from Poles and Lithuanians in the 17th century to the Swedes, Austrians, and Ottomans in the 18th century; the French, British, and Ottomans in the 19th century; and the Japanese and Germans in the early 20th century. Avoiding armed conflict was not an option, for the very rules of inclusion in the great-power club "were simple and brutal: to belong, you had to defeat a current member in war."[21] From the beginning of Europe's world domination, the economically backward Russians had to become a great power and accept the realities of militarism.

These considerations of international competition help to explain the overall development of Russia's political system since Peter the Great. Westernist attempts to hold Peter chiefly responsible for its key institutions and progression are insufficient. Critics of Peter included religious thinkers from the Old Believers to Petr Chaadayev and the early Slavophiles as well as those who, like historian Nicholai Karamzin, cherished the Russian customs and traditions undermined by the tsar's modernization. However, it was the competitive structure of international relations that pushed Russia in the direction of militarism and state-driven modernization rather than merely Peter's character. The tsar's role was indeed enormous, yet it served to reinforce the already established need to preserve state sovereignty in an increasingly volatile external environment. Without Peter or someone like him on the throne, Russia might not have survived as an independent state. The country had to deal with military pressures from abroad before and after Peter, and it was these pressures that drove the tsars to further consolidate their power by limiting the autonomy of other social groups. Since the 19th century, most

Russian thinkers have increasingly accepted the difficult choices made by Peter. Westernizers, socialists, and even religious thinkers such as Vladimir Solovyev credited the tsar, Russia's towering figure, as necessary for the country's development. Another school, the Eurasianists, took issue with Peter's pro-Western orientation but did not question the principle of domestic concentration of power. In George Vernadsky's expression, "Autocracy and serfdom were the price the Russian people had to pay for national survival."[22]

Peter's system lasted longer than that of Muskovy largely because the new system grew even more centralized. Russia was able to respond to the growing pressures from abroad because it could generate sufficient revenue, borrow the required military technology, and recruit as many soldiers as was necessary. Peter's successors could not deviate from the established pattern in any principal way. Their reform projects—from Mikhail Speranski's ideas to Alexander II's Great Reforms and Nicholas II's October 1905 Manifesto—could only be successful if they were respectful of the main tenet of the autocratic system: centralized power. As soon as such reforms threatened to dismantle it, the tsars retreated from their original reformist intentions.

An example of such a transformation from reformer to conservative on the throne is Alexander I. The tsar came to power as a European liberal, whose political views had been shaped by his educator, the Swiss philosopher Frederic-Cesar La Harpe, and influenced by French revolutionary experience. Alexander's plan for internal reforms was far reaching and included the liberation of the serfs and changes in the administrative and educational systems and the constitution. Externally, the tsar had a formed vision of a liberal European order and wanted a new peace treaty to be concluded upon completion of the Napoleonic wars that would serve "as a basis for the reciprocal relations of the European states," binding them not to begin a war without exhausting all means of mediation and empowering them to turn against the treaty's offender.[23] However, Alexander's war experience challenged and transformed his liberal secular outlook. When Napoleon occupied Moscow and the tsar's popularity was at its lowest point, Alexander turned to religion. He was increasingly fearful of the French revolutionary ideas and later proposed to establish the Holy Alliance to suppress revolutionary regimes, viewing them, along with Metternich of Austria and Frederick William of Prussia, as the principal threat to Europe.

Alexander I's brother, Nicholas I, acted on the same vision. Not only did he suppress internal revolts, but he was also labeled the Gendarme of Europe for leading the way in suppressing the 1840s nationalist revolutions in Europe. As Russia and liberal Europe's divergence in values grew,

international competition for power again contributed to the consolidation of Russia's autocracy. Britain and France were not satisfied with the Vienna system, and each sought to challenge Russia's position as a great power competitor. By insisting that the country was too "barbaric" and "autocratic," the European powers wanted to undermine Russia's influence in the Balkans. This international competition served as a key reason for the Crimean War. After being defeated, Russia revived the idea of reforming the system. As previously, preserving the state's military competitiveness were important considerations behind the reforms.

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4

Decline and Revolution

Russia cannot be a great power with an economy in ruins.
Russia's finance minister VLADIMIR KOKOVTSEV[1]

The 19th-Century Decline

Russia's victory over Napoleon was the country's last triumph and—paradoxically—a lost opportunity to reform its political and economic system. Although Alexander I had plans to liberate the serfs, change the administrative and educational systems, and introduce the constitution, he never seriously acted on them. His conservative brother, Nicholas I, was even less inclined to reform the system and remained a firm believer in the dynastic solidarity with European autocratic governments to preserve peace and stability on the continent. It was Nicholas who took Russia into the disastrous Crimean War, which exposed the country's multiple internal weaknesses. The tsar wanted to confirm Russia's traditional authority as a Christian power by protecting the rights of millions of Christians within the Ottoman Empire, but he overplayed his hand and miscalculated the reactions of France and Britain. Faced with the prospect of fighting a coalition of stronger powers rather than Turkey alone, Nicholas also did not find a graceful way to retreat. Finally, convinced of the superiority of his domestic system, he misjudged the level of support for the war at home.[2] His expectations of the war's potential to mobilize Russian patriotic feelings—in the manner of the War of 1812—were probably based on initially sympathetic commentaries by Slavophiles. But even the latter began to withdraw their support once the war was going badly. Unable to continue with the war, Russia accepted harsh conditions for peace at the Paris congress by losing the right to protect Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Empire and to hold a fleet in the Black Sea. It was a crushing blow to Russia's reputation as a Christian protector in the Balkans and to its prestige as a major European power.

Russia's failure was partly self-inflicted. The country was not prepared for a major war. Its economic and military capabilities were progressively declining relative to those of the mentioned European powers. Analyses of Russia's internal situation further support the conclusion that it was a weak power. This weakness was evident in growing revolts among peasants and in the army—partly the result of Russia's unresolved issue of serfdom. The number of peasant revolts since the 1830s more than doubled from 148 to 348 in the early 1850s.[3] Russia was also lagging behind in technology and finance, and its best minds widely accepted the defeat as the price for its internal weakness. As Grand Duke Konstantin stated, "We are both weaker and poorer than the first-class powers, and furthermore poorer not only in material but also in mental resources, especially in matters of administration."[4] The Crimean War established Russia's status as a declining power, and, as a declining power, it suffered from economic weakness and political instability.

Economically, Russia was falling further behind the advanced European countries.[5] Besides losing nearly half a million people to the war, Russia found itself in a dire financial situation. The post-war deficit was close to one billion rubles, which some historians have characterized as on the brink of bankruptcy. Foreign debt was so large that Western banks were reluctant to lend money. Alexander, who reviewed the situation in 1862, assessed it as "indeed critical."[6] Russia was both technologically backward and overly centralized. An enormous landmass, it nevertheless lacked railroads and often had to rely on horses and sometimes even moved troops by foot. The army was poorly trained and underequipped. For example, by the Crimean War, Russian soldiers only had flintlock muskets with a range of 200 yards, while British and French rifles could reach a target within 1,000 yards.[7] No less important were administrative issues. The Russian army lacked command flexibility and needed an improved system of military recruitment that would successfully respond to the European practices of specialized training and mass nationalist mobilization.[8]

The Russian leadership understood the need to revive the country's domestic foundations by reforming the system. Under Alexander II, Russia moved in the direction of changing the institutions of autocratic power by emancipating the serfs, relaxing state censorship, and encouraging development of local self-government initiatives. However, the government continued to maintain a high level of defense expenditures. During 1885–1913, such expenditures were around 25% of the overall state budget. While staying relatively passive on the European front, Russia continued to be active in the Balkans, and during 1877–1878 it fought another war with Turkey. In

the meantime, the government did little to improve working conditions and health care. Overall, Russia's performance in military affairs was mixed, and the economy was showing a pattern of a highly uneven development, indicating serious structural imbalances. It grew rapidly during the 1890s and 1910s but sunk into depression during the 1880s and 1900s. To compensate for the economic weaknesses, the government increasingly relied on foreign loans. Germany was a source of massive credit for Russia's war with Turkey, and France and Britain became the most important donors to the Russian economy since the 1900s.

The second indicator of decline had to do with growing political instability in the country. The Crimean War revealed a growing social dissatisfaction with the government's performance. Ideas of popular sovereignty and social equality were no longer shared only by narrow elite circles, from the Decembrists to the Westernizers, but were also spreading across various social strata. Increasingly, violence accompanied the spread of progressive ideas. The assassination of Alexander II by a member of the leftist organization Popular Will in 1881 opened the way to a further radicalization and polarization of politics. The government reacted harshly, but the violence continued to spread, and leftist organizations grew more resourceful and organized. The Marxist movement soon became the strongest and embraced methods of terror to achieve its political objectives. The tsar too relied on repressions. In January 1905 he ordered the use of force against a workers' procession to deliver a petition to the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg. That the troops opened fire and killed hundreds of people served to strengthen the growing protest and led to massive strikes. In response, the government offered a number of political concessions including the establishment of the Duma or parliament. Yet state repressions continued. Pyotr Stolypin, the powerful prime minister under Nicholas II, was especially tough on terrorism, but in 1911 Stolypin himself was gunned down by a terrorist. Russia's decision to enter the First World War further destabilized the political system. Repeated military defeats resulted in the abdication of Nicholas and, ultimately, a new revolution.

Causes of Decline

The decline and ultimate collapse of Russia's strong state system can be explained by the already familiar combination of international pressures and social demands at home. Rather than placing all the blame on the system, it is important to understand the structural challenges that it faced as well as the tsar's personal inability to offer adequate solutions.

As before, Russia after the Crimean War was confronted with growing threats to national security. Because the Ottoman Empire was not covered by the Vienna system, Russia, with its Orthodox commitments, was eventually led into confrontation with others, such as Britain, who were growing critical of St. Petersburg's eastern policy. After the war, the Europe-centered international system had entered the era of secular nationalist politics, with little room left for the traditional Christian values that had united the continent before the Crimean War. After decades of relative stability, international relations were transitioning to a period of anarchy and great power competition.

Under this new environment, the European powers were not interested in a strong Russia and sought to consolidate or even undermine its position as a defeated power. The attitude of the British government was especially hostile. Hopes to rise to the position of European hegemon as well as firmly entrenched Russophobia shaped London's perception of Russia. Much of the European dislike of Russia originated in Britain soon after the establishment of the Vienna system of international relations. Britain was the only power that opposed the end of the Crimean War on Austria-proposed conditions. London also labored to weaken Russia's influence in the Balkans and to prevent France and Prussia from getting too close to Russia. During the Polish revolt, Britain presented Alexander with the most strongly worded demands, and British perception further hardened in response to Russia's successful expansion in the Caucasus and Central Asia.

The positions of other European powers toward Russia were not as hawkish, yet they too reflected the desire to prevent the possible rise of Russia as a political and military great power competitor. That was true of Austria, which sought to preserve its position in the Balkans and reached out to Russia only when Austria felt threatened by Prussia. That was also true of France, which was eager to preserve the victorious status of the post–Crimean War system. Finally, that was especially true of Prussia, which aimed to unify the German lands around it and was interested in Russia only to the extent that the latter was able to offset potentially dangerous French and Austrian influences. As Germany emerged as a unified power after defeating France in 1870, France and Britain were largely preoccupied with deterring what they viewed as a dangerous revisionist power in Europe. Over time, Germany reinforced this perception by developing offensive plans. Rather than practicing moderation and even-handedness, European powers developed expansionist nationalist beliefs and became locked in a tight security dilemma.[9] Under the growing competition for power, Russia was increasingly pushed to side with one of the warring parties.

What further exacerbated Russia's sense of insecurity was its economic vulnerability. The preservation of great power status necessitated security, which was expensive. Russia had to maintain a high level of defense, and that required it to borrow from other powerful states. However, foreign loans frequently meant not only economic but also political dependence. While Russia's modernization required relative neutrality and low security commitments, its dependence on outside powers translated into entangling military alliances. For instance, Russia's alliance with France in 1892 and the subsequent decision to view Germany as the main threat to Russia's security is difficult to understand without analyzing the decline of Russian–German economic ties. Germany was a source of massive credit for Russia's war with Turkey during 1877–1878, and in 1881 Russia, Germany, and Austria signed the Three Emperors League agreement. However, during the 1890s Russia and Germany, both with mercantilist leanings, became involved in a bitter trade war,[10] which marked the beginning of the decline of their bilateral relations. Although Russia managed to secure a substantial loan from Germany in 1902, the latter continued to sever its ties with the former ally in response to its rapprochement with France.

The second pressure on Russia's political system was internal and reflected a rise of society's involvement in politics. Already before the Crimean War, the country's weakness was revealed by growing revolts among peasants and in the army—partly the result of Russia's unresolved issue of serfdom. After the war, social pressures increased, partly in response to Alexander II's reforms. From the perspective of political stability, the reforms were a double-edged sword. In the longer run, they promised stable growth and stronger support for an active foreign policy. In words of Foreign Minister Alexander Gorchakov, "Russia cannot play an active role in its external policy when it is faced with internal poverty and mismanagement."[11] Russia's reforms, including emancipation of the serfs, laid an important precondition for the country's economic development. During 1860–1877, Russia's industrial output grew several times, and the nation's combined production of mining, textile, iron, and food industries during 1860–1900 not only outpaced the West but the rest of the world.[12]

However, reforms were also destabilizing because they meant greater social mobility, inequality, and involvement in politics of previously dormant social classes. Household serfs were freed without land and had to join the ranks of the urban proletariat. Many serfs from private estates did not receive enough land to survive. In addition, all those who received land had to obtain state loans to pay full price and significant interest for the land.

To be successful, these reforms needed active state involvement to minimize socially negative consequences, which required additional revenue. Such revenue, however, was not easily available. The government also did little to improve working conditions and health care, which led to a rise of economic and political strikes. The average length of the working day was 13 to 14 hours, pay was very low, and living conditions were poor.[13] As a result, society was growing increasingly economically divided and politically polarized.

Under the dual pressures from abroad and at home, the optimal course of action was to seek relatively low involvement in international affairs while concentrating on internal reforms. Advocates of such a course existed and included late-19th-century diplomats and members of the tsar's government. Gorchakov, whose policy made German unification possible, wanted to have strong and balanced ties with both France and Germany as a way of preventing the hegemonic ambitions of either one. Other top diplomats, Giers and Lamsdorf, sought to buy years of domestic and international tranquility and develop "a beneficial balance of forces," not a military alliance, which would offend Germany. Among other statesmen, Prime Minister Sergei Witte and his successor, Ivan Vyshnegradsky, understood the importance of maintaining strong and balanced ties with Germany for the sake of preserving peace and continuing with necessary modernization at home. After Witte's resignation, his moderate position was advocated by Pyotr Stolypin and Vladimir Kokovtsev.

However, the course of moderate foreign policy and internal reforms required a firm commitment from the leadership, which was not easy to sustain. Securing relative peace and stability required complex negotiations with both Germany and France, status quo commitments among major European powers, and additional revenue at home. For example, unlike the more pro-Western elites that came to shape policy attitudes after 1906, Witte understood that even Russia's political sovereignty, let alone great power status, were not assured under conditions of economic dependence. As a solution, he defended a flexible external borrowing policy, and he supported a broad continental alliance with Germany and France despite the two's growing tensions over Morocco.[14] Witte also tried to secure additional revenue for urgent domestic needs. This was difficult, given growing pressures from the military. As the finance minister before the war with Japan, he kept cash on hand out of fear that his budget might be undermined by notorious war hawks, such as Alexander Bezobrazov and Vyacheslav von Pleve.[15]

Under growing external and domestic pressures, Alexander III and especially Nicholas II chose a different course—the one that set the country

on a path to further destabilization. In foreign relations, this course was associated with attempts to isolate Germany and side with France and against Germany. In domestic affairs, the course meant prioritizing military build-up over economic reforms. Already Alexander III believed that Germany was bent on war with Russia and supported a secret military agreement with France, which obligated Russia to provide military assistance to France in the event of a German attack. During the 1900s, in the context of growing economic dependence on France and Britain, Nicholas II agreed with the assessment that the defeat of Germany was the main aim in a European war. The tsar commanded that all war planning be based on the assumption of a massive German attack and developed a belief in deterring, rather than engaging, Germany to preserve the European peace. Nicholas's increasingly anti-German views affected policy formation and the process of selecting officials. Within foreign affairs, the policy establishment moderates such as Giers and Lamsdorf came to be gradually replaced by more pro-Western diplomats.

Although potentially destabilizing, this course was nonetheless politically popular because it relied on the country's powerful tradition of nationalism and militarism. Russian imperial nationalism emerged as especially influential in response to the national humiliation after the defeat in the Crimean War, which ultimately bred strong domestic support for another war with Turkey in 1877. Panslavists, as successors to the Slavophiles, developed an ambitious international program, seeking to remove the Balkan Slavs from the control of Turkey and the European powers and to organize the Slavs into a federation under Russia's patronage. Panslavists viewed the entire official Europe as the enemy because it did not accept Russia's "natural" Greco-Slavic way of living. Still, to them, the most serious threat to Russia in the West came from Germany and the Romano-Germanic type that it represented. The ability of Panslavists to influence Russia's official course was considerable—partly because of their ability to exploit the new openness (*glasnost*) encouraged by Alexander II's reforms. During the period of 1855–1875, the number of periodicals and their circulation increased fourfold,[16] and censorship was not as strict as under Nicholas I.

Imperial nationalism had many sympathizers within the political class. A number of diplomats advocated an assertive policy to strengthen Russia's position in the Balkans by taking control of the Slavic lands and challenging the position of Austria. Increasingly, Germany was supportive of Austria but not Russia. In March 1909, when Austria occupied Bosnia and Herzegovina, Germany forced Russia to accept annexation by issuing an ultimatum.

The two Balkan wars in 1912 and 1913 further destabilized Russia's relations with Austria and Germany. In May 1912, the tsar endorsed an even more offensive war plan, devised by the military and opposed by several of his ministers. Following the Balkan wars, a military confrontation among great powers was only waiting for an additional provocation. The assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand by Serbian nationalist Gavrilo Princip became such a provocation. Soon, Russia found itself embroiled in the First World War.

The other prominent supporters of Nicholas's nationalist vision were on the General Staff. The military advocated the alliance with France from the start and pushed for the country's further militarization. The Finance Ministry opposed militarization, which it viewed as undermining the economy and national finances. In 1906, in response to the new Rearmament Program, Finance Minister Kokovtsev insisted that "Russia cannot be a great power with an economy in ruins," to which his chief opponent Chief of Staff General Palitsyn replied that even the largest military budget costs less than a lost war.[17] It was the military that devised offensive plans in 1910 and 1912, and it was the military that was quick to propose mobilization in response to the Balkan wars.

That the tsar's vision was similar to that of the War Ministry is also evident from his spending decisions. However weak and indecisive, Nicholas nevertheless always supported military requests for additional credits, defying his prime ministers and ministers of finance. Kokovtsev, who succeeded Stolypin as prime minister, recalled how Nicholas justified his support of Minister of War V. A. Sukhomlinov's requests in the hope to solve the conflict in the Balkans: "I cannot say No to military expenditures. With God's help, we may be able to extinguish the fire in the Balkans. I will never forgive myself if I refuse credits to the military even for one Ruble."[18]

The Decade of Revolutions

The revolutionary decade of 1905–1917 witnessed an escalation of the identified impact of external threats, internal instability, and failed leadership.

The Revolution of 1905 was a combination of Russia's failed policies and international pressures. Rather than concentrating on domestic modernization—as prescribed by supporters of moderate policy in his court—Nicholas engaged in provocative behavior in the Far East. His decision to seize Port Arthur in 1898 was especially risky and ultimately resulted in a Japanese attack in February

1904.[19] The Russian military campaign was not successful, and, just as with the Crimean War, once Port Arthur was lost to the Japanese in January 1905, the feelings of patriotism in society were replaced with those of frustration and anger directed at the regime. The revolution, while not a direct response to the military defeat, could only take place in the context of an external humiliation. The weak regime eventually yielded to workers' demands by promising a constitution and new political freedoms.

The revolution became a crucial point in terms of exacerbating Russia's dependence on France and Britain. The defeat in the war with Japan made Russia dependent on French financial assistance. Russia's revealed weakness was such that the government alone could not successfully stabilize the situation. The 2,250 million franc loan by France to Russia in April 1906 provided Nicholas II with necessary funds to suppress the growing revolution. So dependent was Russia that its finance minister at one point informed a prominent French banker of Russia's tentative budget before making it public in Russia.[20] Paris took advantage of Nicholas's weakness by orchestrating a campaign against "tsarist despotism" at home and pressuring him to revise his threat assessment. The loan was given under restrictions and only after the tsar had agreed that defeat of Germany was the main aim in a European war. In 1907, Russia also broadened relations with Britain. Russia's 1907 settlement with Japan was reached with British political assistance to the interests of Anglo-French entente and soon after Russia had revised its threat assessment and dropped the anti-British element from its previous military agreement. This was also done largely through French efforts.

Domestic support for France and Britain was also growing, partly because the public and political class were unaware of the tsar's secret treaties and military commitments made to the Western nations. Besides the tsar and the increasingly pro-Western foreign policy establishment, support for Westernization came from the expanding liberal part of the political spectrum—the intellectual and commercial classes. After Nicholas's 1905 manifesto and creation of the State Duma, the party of constitutional democrats (*Kadets*) gained political prominence and did not hide its sympathies for the British and French models of development. The rising capitalist class also favored the West, as Russia was increasing its grain exports to Britain, and French and British capital was expanding its presence in the Russian stock market. The national discourse was that of modernization and catching up with liberal Europe, rather than the preservation of state sovereignty and autonomy in international affairs. Many liberals also demonstrated strong anti-German feelings. For instance, Foreign Minister Alexander Izvol'sky, who took office

in 1906, believed that "basic political reform will bring us closer to Europe, and ease the foreign minister's task abroad,"[21] but he also supported the tsar's expensive military and rearmament programs "to remain among the great powers."[22]

Russia's decision to enter the First World War in 1914 demonstrated, again, that the lessons from the military defeats were not learned. Rather than trying to improve relations with Germany, Nicholas was becoming progressively involved in the Franco-British military alliance while remaining supportive of Balkan nationalism. Having declined a defensive pact proposed by the German emperor in October 1904, Russia was drifting in the direction of confrontation with the country. The problem, as described by William Fuller, was that "the tsarist regime was reluctant to display any signs of weakness in its dealings abroad and was therefore reluctant to accept any diminution in Russia's international standing and prestige."[23] St. Petersburg acted on great power nationalism, an inflexible pro-Western agenda, and anti-German paranoia. Although William II was no Hitler, Russia further distanced itself from Germany by designing deterrence and then offensive war plans. After Russia's humiliating acceptance of the German ultimatum to recognize the Austrian annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1909, Nicholas tried to engage Germany. However, the agreement reached in November 1910 that Germany would not support Austria's Balkan ambitions did not survive the test of the two Balkan wars during the period of 1912–1913. Russia and Germany could no longer trust each other.

Nicholas's subsequent decision to enter the war had further devastating effects on Russia's fragile political system. Repeated military defeats resulted in his abdication. While the Revolution of 1905 took away the tsar's informal authority in the eyes of the people as their ultimate protector, the abdication that followed the revolution of February 1917 destroyed the institutional foundations of the strong state model. In the meantime, the polarizing effects of the war defeats continued with the new Russian Smuta moving toward its violent ending. The situation of a de facto dual power (*dvoyevlastiye*) emerged. The dual power meant that the society was divided between those supporting the provisional government and those recruited by the Soviets, the alternative power structure controlled by representatives of the lower classes. While the government wanted political reform, the Soviets increasingly advocated egalitarian social and economic policies. Their main branch, the Petrograd Soviet, functioned alongside the government.

The most radical socialist group, the Bolsheviks, sensed the growing opportunity from the county's war defeats. In April, the Bolsheviks, who had

already opposed the government's decision to fight the war, proclaimed their opposition to all policies by the provisional government. Vladimir Lenin returned from exile to argue in his "April Theses" that the main task was no longer to coexist or cooperate with the bourgeoisie but to seize power. The subsequent events worked in Lenin's favor. Not only was there a political vacuum in St. Petersburg, but in early July the government launched an offensive on the German front, which again ended in a military defeat. The defeat led to a political crisis with half a million soldiers and workers protesting against the government on the capitol's streets. In August, the demoralized military attempted to seize power and restore order. However, the attempt failed, with a considerable portion of the coup's army defecting to the socialists and the Soviets. The new Russian Smuta was moving toward its conclusion. In October, the Bolsheviks, who controlled the Petrograd Soviet, convinced the loyal military to support the armed uprising against the government.

The causes of the third revolution, the Revolution of October 1917, continue to be disputed, with some historians pointing to the incompatibility of the strong state system with capitalism.[24] The real picture was more complex and had to do with the tsar and the government's failures to manage the external pressures as well as the ability of the Bolsheviks to take advantage of the situation. The Bolsheviks won because, of all the political forces in the country, only they consistently opposed Russia's participation in the increasingly disastrous war. No less important, Lenin and his comrades worked hard to spread their message across the lower classes and win their support in the Soviets. By September 1917, the Bolsheviks had a majority in the Soviets of most big cities. They led many workers' strikes in Petrograd and other cities across the empire. They worked in the rural countryside and on the front. Their simple slogans—"peace to soldiers," "land to peasants," and "factories to workers"—resonated with the lower classes much better than the government's calls to unite and fight until victory.

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5

The Soviet State

We are fifty or a hundred years behind the advanced countries. We must make good this distance in ten years. Either we do it, or we shall be crushed.

JOSEPH STALIN[1]

The Origins

The origins of Russia's third strong state system were in communist ideology and harsh international realities. The two reinforced each other: the Bolsheviks' ideology of class struggle made it difficult to coexist with the Western "capitalist" world, whereas the West's hostility toward the USSR served to exacerbate the Soviet perception of insecurity.

Bolsheviks came to power convinced that their revolution would soon be spread to other parts of the world. Their doctrine of world revolution implied the need to have a chain reaction of other socialist revolutions in Europe, without which the revolution in Russia would not be secure amid the fierce opposition from the capitalist nations. In 1919, the Bolsheviks established the Communist International (Comintern) to promote such revolutions by spreading communist ideas and setting up new communist parties abroad. Internally, they established a system of military communism in which everything was to be decided from the top and executed with the help of an army of state bureaucrats. A product of the civil war, the system also had its roots in the Marxist critique of private property and "bourgeois" parliamentarism. For example, the Bolsheviks' dissolution of the Constitutional Assembly in January 1918 resulted not only from their frustration with the results of the elections but also from the belief that their own system of Soviets "as revolutionary organs of the entire people" was "incomparably superior to all parliaments anywhere in the world."[2]

Aside from communist ideology, the origins of the Soviet system beared strong resemblance with those responsible for rise of the Muskovy and

St. Petersburg's systems. As before, the country was vulnerable to the pressures of economic and technological backwardness and external threats from advanced European states. Indeed, the pressures on the Bolsheviks were incomparably more severe than those on the tsar. Externally, the Soviet Union was increasingly isolated. The new Soviet state was losing the war with Germany, and in March 1918 the Bolsheviks agreed to extremely harsh conditions for peace at Brest-Litovsk. Poland, Finland, the Baltic states, and Ukraine were to be ceded to Germany and Austria, and some territories in the Caucasus, to Turkey. The lost territories were a core of Russian industry, population, and fertile agricultural land.[3] In addition, Soviet Russia found itself encircled and isolated by the Western powers. In response to the Bolshevik revolution, Britain, France, and the United States refused to recognize the legitimacy of the Russian state and launched a military intervention against it. Russia's international position began to change only in 1922, when Germany recognized the Bolsheviks. Building on already-established trade relations, the two sides signed the Treaty of Rapallo, renouncing territorial claims and recognizing each other's borders.[4] Britain and France did not recognize Russia until 1924, and their relations to the Soviets remained tense. The United States did not extend diplomatic recognition to the Bolsheviks until 1933.[5]

The harsh realities of insecurity and backwardness shaped the Soviet perception of the outside world and of what was required to respond to Western pressures. Real threats from the West were accompanied by the Bolshevik regime's internal weaknesses. Russia suffered from a long, violent, and devastating civil war, which took a formidable toll. According to some estimates, about 8 million people were victims of the civil war and terror during 1918–1922.[6] Industry was disorganized, and agricultural production devastated. In addition to the violence, the horrific Volga famine, which was partly the result of forced requisition of grain from the peasantry, took the lives of an additional four million people.[7] The army was no longer prepared to follow the Bolshevik's orders without changes in economic and political conditions, as the revolt at the Kronstadt naval base of March 1921 demonstrated. The Soviet regime was headed toward collapse and survived largely because it adopted a more liberal policy toward the peasants known as the New Economic Policy (NEP).

The combination of external insecurity with weakness at home served to exacerbate the Soviet's already strong sense of encirclement by a hostile capitalist environment. Despite diplomatic recognition by the West, the Soviet leaders lived in a constant fear of being attacked. In 1927, in response to several setbacks in relations with European powers, Josef Stalin expressed

the view of many of his comrades when he wrote, "The chief contemporary question is that of the threat of a new imperialist war. It is a matter of a real and material *threat* of a new war in general, and a war against the USSR in particular."[8] Communist ideology posited the principal incompatibility of capitalism with socialism and expected conflicts to prevail over cooperation in their relationship. The Bolsheviks viewed the intentions of the "advanced capitalist countries" as either greatly or moderately threatening depending on the Western nations' internal strength and unity.

After the Second World War, Russia returned to the familiar pattern of mistrust in relations with the West. Although allies during the war, the two sides soon rediscovered major differences and progressed toward confrontation and Cold War. The Soviet Union again felt vulnerable to military and economic pressures from the West. Western political pressure began with Winston Churchill's speech in March 1946 in which he accused Moscow of sponsoring a communist "fifth column" inside Western states, ruled out the possibility of an alliance with Stalin, and proposed to reorder the world on the principles of "Christian civilization."[9] The United States also evolved toward the policy of isolating the USSR and began acting in concert with Britain to undermine the Soviet Union. Suspicious of Soviet ambitions to dominate the world, the US government revised its relatively realistic assessments of Soviet intentions and capabilities of 1945 to a paranoid fear of the Kremlin's preparedness to penetrate the Western nations.[10] Western leaders had reason to be suspicious of Stalin, who, in his turn, was driven by perceptions of the West's greed and by betrayals from the dubious Treaty of Versailles to the appeasement of Hitler in Munich. As Walter LaFeber acknowledged,

> [If the] Soviets were suspicious of the West, they were realistic. … The West had poured thousands of troops into Russia between 1917 and 1920, refused to cooperate with the Soviets during the 1930s, tried to turn Hitler against Stalin in 1938, reneged on promises about the second front, and in 1945 tried to penetrate areas Stalin deemed crucial to Soviet security.[11]

Russia continued to be anything but confident in terms of its living standards and ability to survive under Western economic pressures. Before the Second World War, Stalin launched radical policies of mass collectivization and industrialization to catch up with the West, which some scholars compare to conservative tsarist modernizations.[12] Like his tsarist predecessors, he was thinking in terms of overcoming Russia's backwardness, which he

viewed as a potential threat to his country's survival, to catch up to the West. The situation after the war was not much more encouraging. Although the Soviet Union had defeated a powerful adversary, the country was economically devastated and technologically backward. In 1945, relative to 1940 levels, its national income was at 83%; industrial production, 92%; and agricultural production, 60%.[13] A US intelligence report in November 1945 realistically estimated that the USSR would not be willing to "risk a major armed conflict" for at least fifteen years.[14] Aware of these weaknesses, the Soviet Union insisted on war reparations, and it was especially hopeful that it could dismantle German industries and exploit German workers.[15]

Still, the Soviets had their reasons not only to fear the West but also be proud of their ability to withstand outside pressures and develop a state of their own. To the leaders of the USSR, that state's survival despite civil war, foreign intervention, and harsh policies of isolation pursued by the Western nations demonstrated the vitality of the Soviet strong state system. In Vladimir Lenin's view, the Soviet Union had, despite being surrounded by capitalism, obtained a degree of security after winning a devastating civil war and thwarting Western ambitions to topple the Bolshevik regime. This meant the arrival of a new period of development during which "our basic international existence in the context of capitalist states is secure."[16] Stalin too felt a great pride in the Soviet state and its socialist institutions. After the Second World War, he reminded Western leaders that the Soviet Union single-handedly won the most important battles against the Nazis, including the battles for Moscow, Kursk, and Stalingrad, and unquestionably contributed a much greater share of resources to the overall victory in the war. To Stalin, this was a demonstration of his nation's social advantages, "our victory means … that our Soviet social system has won, that the Soviet social system has successfully withstood the trial in the flames of war and proved its perfect viability."[17]

The Soviet State: Continuity and Change

The described international and domestic conditions led to the establishment of an extremely centralized political system. Its core features included single-party rule, communist ideology, state control over the economy, a high degree of territorial centralization, and isolation from the outside world. The Soviet state built on some of the old Russian practices,[18] yet it also underwent major mutations and was an aberration viewed against the natural phases of Russia's historic statehood. The Soviet system reproduced parts of the old tradition in a sharply disfigured form. State attempts to control the Church were replaced

with atheist ideology, the traditional autocratic state with the rule of the Communist Party, the old service class with the party nomenklatura, and the old patrimonial practices with the complete control over the economy by the state. The overall control over public and private life was unprecedented: the Soviet system functioned as an extreme version of autocracy that sought to eliminate all the traditional constraints to state power. Such a system could only emerge and develop in the era of industrial technology and under the harsh imperatives of survival.

The consolidation of power in the Soviet state, brought about by the threatening international environment in which it was created, could not, in itself, guarantee survival. The new state survived and functioned for seventy years because it solved a number of important problems. It secured borders, restored order, created a new social class of state-employed workers who benefited from the system, and instilled nationalist pride for Soviet accomplishments among the population. The list of such accomplishments included victory over Nazi Germany, full employment, free education and medical services, and a steady improvement of living standards relative to previous generations. The severe external pressures helped to sustain the state, but it was ultimately the state's ability to improve the living standards of its citizens that provided the internal glue to the system. By the 1960s—another indicator of its effectiveness—the system had produced a sizable middle class. However, during the period from 1960 to 1986 the state's inability to satisfy the expectations of the new middle class inside the USSR undermined the system from within.

In response to changing international and domestic conditions, the Soviet system functioned in different modes across time. Stalin's and Leonid Brezhnev's regimes may be compared along mobilization and normalization lines. Stalin's state emerged and was consolidated when the system's survival was at stake. Under severe external pressures, Stalin succeeded in tapping into instincts of popular survival and nationalism by building the system of mass mobilization. Only the extreme post–civil war conditions and the pressures of survival can explain the state's ability to manipulate the public consciousness and the high degree of social tolerance for state violence against the many perceived disloyal to the Soviet system. Under these conditions, Stalin's regime managed to mobilize the population for mass industrialization and collectivization as well as for fighting against Hitler. By contrast, Brezhnev's rule inherited a period of internal stability, rising living standards, and faced no direct threat of foreign invasion. Because of the mutual deterrence regime, nuclear competition during the Cold War could not pose the

Table 5.1 International Conditions of the Soviet Regimes

Threat		Regime
Severe existential threats	→	Stalinism and mobilization for war
No existential threat	→	Brezhnevism and new social contract

same type of threat. Instead, the US–Soviet nuclear arms race served various political objectives from bolstering international status to assisting internal consolidation via construction of the foreign threat image. In addition, the nuclear competition was interrupted during the Detante era in the 1970s. As a result, the regime was relatively mild and respectful of elites' and society's growing autonomy from the state. Table 5.1 compares the international conditions of the two Soviet regimes.

Although Stalin became the de facto ruler of the Soviet system immediately following the death of Vladimir Lenin in 1924, the mass mobilization projects did not begin until the late 1920s. The NEP adopted by Lenin at the 10th Party Congress in March 1921 was successful in generating the revenue required for stabilizing the Soviet state. Lenin persuaded his comrades that the new state was in need of a temporary "breathing space" in the struggle for world revolution. The Bolshevik leader made a call to "learn from capitalism" in economics while preserving strict control of the "commanding heights" in politics. The peasantry was to obtain greater freedom in selling its products, yet no factions, let alone dissent, were to be tolerated within or outside the party. The NEP's foreign policy equivalent was what Lenin called "peaceful coexistence" with capitalism until "the capitalist states of Western Europe have completed their development to socialism."[19] Arguing against what he called "infantile leftism," Lenin visualized peaceful coexistence as "a new and lengthy period of development." During this period, the Soviet leaders had to restore diplomatic ties with advanced capitalist nations of the West and learn how to obtain their "means of production (locomotives, machines, and electrical equipment)."[20]

However, in the late 1920s, Stalin moved away from the NEP's market-based relationships with the peasantry. Due to a poor harvest, the country was confronted with a severe shortage of grain. By January 1928, it purchased only 300 million poods relative to 428 million the year before, which meant problems supplying the cities with bread as well as financing industrialization through the export of grain.[21] Under these conditions, Stalin chose a forced

requisition of bread and a "full-scale collectivization" in the rural sector, rather than increasing procurement prices or temporarily importing bread from abroad. The justification that he provided was the need to "save the hard currency for importing industrial equipment."[22] Through methods of ideological indoctrination and terror, the state convinced peasants to collectivize their rural households. Within a period of ten years, collectivization of farms moved from 1.7% in 1928 to 93% in 1937.[23]

Simultaneously, Stalin favored a militaristic blueprint for economic development and adopted contingency plans for war. The First Five-Year Plan reflected his threat perception by connecting the issue of military power to that of economic industrialization.[24] Although the top Soviet commanders, such as Mikhail Tukhachevski, advocated a rapid and thorough modernization of the military during the First Five-Year Plan, Stalin chose to build the entire economy around the demand to be mobilized for "the needs of total war."[25] Such militarization of the economy, while not uncommon for other nations, including Italy, France, and Germany, put additional strain on the system. For example, during 1933–1936, the Soviet state's procurement in aviation increased about fourfold; in tanks, threefold; and in naval construction and artillery, fourfold. The overall defense budget was also increased by several factors.[26]

Stalin's mobilization regime also found its reflection in media policies and foreign relations. Since the early 1930s, the media was increasingly promoting the notion of the "Motherland" by connecting Soviet policies to those of the tsarist state. In relation to the West, Soviet propaganda was now presenting Stalin not only as a Leninist but also as a state-builder in the manner of Ivan Kalita, Ivan III, Ivan IV, and Peter the Great, who was forced to develop the capabilities of a great power in the face of growing threats from abroad.[27] In foreign policy, Stalin sought to prepare for a future war by maneuvering between the Western powers and Germany and abandoning the old Bolshevik ideas of world revolution. That the Soviet leader was no longer thinking about world revolution was evident from his decision to quietly dismantle the Communist International (Comintern) and turn to more accepted tools of diplomacy.[28] Stalin dispatched Foreign Minister Maxim Litvinov to work on establishing a collective security system in Europe to prevent the rise of Fascism. Yet, mistrustful of the West, Stalin kept the door open for a possible alliance with Germany and refused to support the social democrats in opposition to the Nazis.

Over the long run, Stalin's isolationist approach to peaceful coexistence, combined with his decision to abruptly end the NEP's policies at home, came

at a great price to the country. The rapid industrialization and collectivization that he imposed on Soviet society undermined the trust of the peasantry in the state for several generations to come. Accompanied by Stalin's paranoid purges within the party, the military, and the intelligentsia, his transformation severely weakened the country's preparedness to withstand an attack from the outside.

Externally, Stalin's purges greatly contributed to the image of the country as an unreliable partner against Hitler. While the suspicious attitudes of France and Britain toward the Soviet Union added to the failure of collective security, Stalin's own contribution to such failure stands in its own right.

After the Second World War, the Soviet state evolved in the direction of relaxing the old mobilization policies. Even though Stalin displayed the same amount of paranoia toward the Western countries and perceived enemies at home, he could no longer exploit the image of a severe existential threat to the homeland. To the Soviet people, victory in the war created a widely shared sense of achieved security from external threats, and for a short while the Western nations were viewed as allies, not enemies. The Cold War shook this feeling of confidence in Soviet society. Stalin sought to control the policies of states in the European and Asian peripheries yet was firmly rebuffed by the Western nations. The Soviet's geopolitically limited "socialist imperialism" was met with the West's global "democratic imperialism."[29] A mutual mistrust between the leaders of the Soviet Union and the United States exacerbated the situation, making it ever more difficult to prevent a full-fledged political confrontation. However, even the threat of the Cold War could not be compared with that during the post-revolutionary period when the combined forces of Britain, France, the United States, and then Nazi Germany launched military interventions against the Bolsheviks.

The international environment in which Brezhnev's regime ruled was therefore substantially less threatening by encouraging its evolution in the direction of normalization. The regime also enjoyed stable sources of revenue and felt little pressure to mobilize elites or the population for ambitious development projects. In the 1960s the economy was developing at the impressive rate of 5%. In addition, since the early 1960s the Soviet Union had discovered large reserves of oil in Western Siberia and began to rely on petrodollars for domestic needs.[30] The world's prices for oil kept growing, and in 1970 oil displaced coal as the world's primary source of energy. Figure 5.1 shows the dynamics of Soviet exports of oil to the Western countries.

In its policies toward elites and society, Brezhnev's regime moved toward embracing limited freedom and pluralism. Instead of the purges and mass

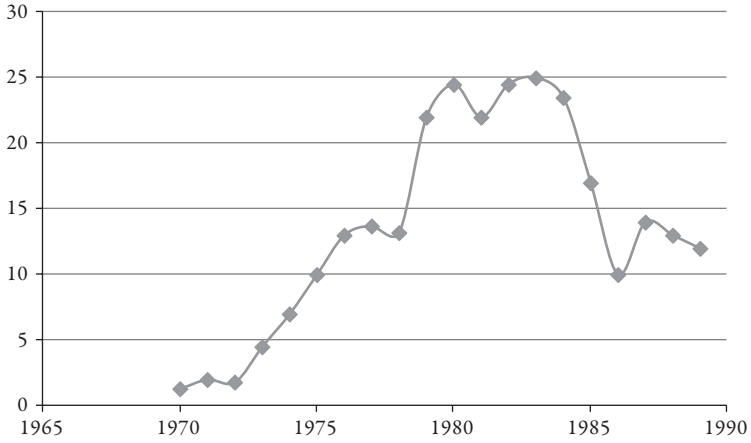

FIGURE 5.1 The Soviet Exports of Oil to the Western Countries (US MM$)
Source: Yegor Gaidar, *Gibel' imperiyi*, 2nd ed. (Moscow: Rosspen, 2007), 220.

terror practiced by Stalin, the regime offered stability and security for all of its supporters. Most of the upper-level leaders were in power for life. Sixty-one percent of the voting members of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of 1961 were reelected in 1971; 81% of those members in 1966 remained members in 1971, and 89% of the Central Committee of 1971 were reelected in 1976.[31] The regime also became much less repressive by relaxing control over society and prosecuting only those engaged in open manifestations of political dissent. Finally, in exchange for political loyalty, the regime was willing to close its eyes to the growing amount of nonsanctioned economic activities (i.e., black market). The heavily industrialized Soviet economy could no longer accommodate the rising consumer demands of a more urban and educated society. As society became predominantly urban, petty private enterprises were actively operating in cities alongside the official economy, offering services from haircuts to obtaining apartments and cars. By some estimates, the "second" economy contributed to 30% to 40% of personal income and involved around 20 million people.[32]

Due to the relaxed international and domestic conditions, the regime was able to tolerate growing corruption, theft, and demoralization without feeling immediate pressures to generate any policy to reverse these trends. The state grew excessively dependent on petrodollars for its stability[33] and refused to consider seriously its economic and political modernization. As the urban middle class felt increasingly pessimistic and disillusioned with the system,[34] Soviet reformers failed to persuade the Kremlin of the need for change.

Indeed, Brezhnev's leadership grew so confident as to pursue risky foreign policies that culminated in the decision to send troops to Afghanistan. The course of detente or improving relations with the West was replaced with that of a renewed confrontation and Cold War.

Reformers of the Soviet State

The Soviet state had its own reformers or those who wanted to modernize the system gradually and without challenging its core political and ideological principles. To be successful, reforms require a strategy of engaging broad social strata in modernization projects. Reforms must also rest on two underlying conditions: international stability and sufficient internal revenue to satisfy the demands of elites and rising social classes. Reforms are a difficult undertaking because they tend to wet social appetites for change; without the structural conditions in place, top-down designed reforms may turn into bottom-up violence, disorder, and revolution, thereby derailing the initial plans for controlled, gradual change.

Three known attempts to reform the Soviet system gradually from above included Vladimir Lenin's NEP of the 1920s, Nikita Khrushchev's de-Stalinization of the late 1950s–early 1960s, and Mikhail Gorbachev's Perestroika of the 1980s. All three failed: the NEP was abandoned out of fear of international instability; de-Stalinization lost to conservative elites; and Perestroika spun out of control due to a lack of both revenue and strategy. Below I discuss the first two attempts in greater detail (Perestroika is discussed in chapter 6).

The NEP was introduced out of state fear of anti-Bolshevik uprisings across the country and included the liberalization of grain requisition policies. Relationships with the peasantry were now organized on market-based principles with only a quota of agricultural products to be submitted to the state under fixed prices. Lenin emphasized the gradualness of building new socialist institutions, contrasting military communism's "revolutionary approach" to economic development with the cautious "reformist approach" under the NEP. In a series of his late articles, he advocated for volunteers' economic associations, or cooperatives, through persuasion and the spread of enlightenment, or "culturalizing" (*kul'turnichestvo*) among the peasants and other social strata.[35] In foreign relations, the new Soviet state was pursuing the policy of peaceful coexistence with capitalism by engaging in trade and diplomacy and participating in the world's economic reconstruction and disarmament.

After Lenin's death, the party's leading intellectual, Nikolai Bukharin, defended this course. In response to the 1928 food crisis, Bukharin

proposed the purchase of the required bread from abroad to preserve the trust of the peasantry and continue with the NEP. It is hard to determine whether the plan of borrowing from abroad for the sake of preserving relations with the peasant class would have worked well, but it is clear that it would have saved Russia the lives of millions. Bukharin did not oppose the projects of collectivization and industrialization but argued in favor of a more gradual approach. He proposed to establish a dual economy in which the state would be in control of heavy industry, transportation, banking, and trade, while smaller enterprises and peasant farming would be regulated by market-based relations. In the late 1920s, when Western capitalism was not perceived as stable, Bukharin still insisted on a sustained engagement with the West, differing from Stalin, who had shifted to viewing the West as ready to launch a war on the USSR. Throughout the 1930s and until his arrest in February 1937, Bukharin was also a supporter of a coalition against Nazi Germany.

The NEP failed largely because its supporters never developed its peaceful coexistence corollary amid the Great Depression and under deteriorating international conditions. Instead of the stabilization of Western capitalism anticipated by Bukharin, the world was entering an increasingly unpredictable period. Under this situation, Stalin gained the political advantage by convincing the party majority of the gathering external threats and a rapidly approaching war with capitalism. Presenting Bukharin and his supporters as soft on capitalism at home and abroad, Stalin was able to isolate his opposition. The idea of the NEP's long coexistence with the private sector and world capitalism required a certain sophistication on the part of the Bolshevik masses, and it was never fully accepted by those who could still remember fighting "capitalists" during the civil war.

The second attempt to reform the Soviet system came when Khrushchev seized power after Stalin's death. Khrushchev succeeded in isolating the Stalinists who insisted on staying the course of military-economic mobilization, peasant exploitation, party centralization, and confrontation with the Western world. In his famous de-Stalinization speech during the 20th Party Congress, the new leader accused Stalin of "deviating" from Leninist norms of intra-party democracy by establishing the "cult of personality." Khrushchev also denounced mass terror against party members, although he never mentioned terror against peasants and the intelligentsia. He rehabilitated some political prisoners, but the party line on Bukharin remained unchanged—the latter was still labeled a member of the "right revisionist" faction within the party that favored the restoration of capitalism.

Khrushchev's reforms were contradictory. In attempting to revive the economy, he introduced the project of economic decentralization by giving more decision-making power to regions and ministries. Of peasant origins himself, he gave peasants internal passports and the right to move from the countryside to the cities. As a part of his agricultural program, he also granted city dwellers the ability to lease small[36] plots of land in collective orchards for growing food and building country houses (*dachas*). However, in his efforts to shift "from guns to butter," he never considered following Lenin and Bukharin's example and relaxing state control over some sectors, and he frequently relied on improvisations, such as the widespread cultivation of corn, even in Siberia. In liberating society from some of the vestiges of ideological dogmatism, Khrushchev encouraged educational reforms and more debate among media and intellectuals. Yet he also reacted harshly to some expressions of the new openness in art and literature. He was also known for utopian promises, such as the one to build the communist system by 1980 or to overtake the United States in the production of milk, meat, and butter. In practice, he had to raise food prices in 1962 and in 1963 after a severe drought exhausted the hard currency reserves for purchasing grain from abroad.

Khrushchev's foreign policies were equally inconsistent and even erratic. He called for a return to Vladimir Lenin's principles of "co-existence" with the capitalist world and wanted to break the taboos of isolationism by bringing Soviet Russia closer to Europe. His disarmament initiatives included a proposal for the mutual disbandment of NATO and the Warsaw Pact in 1955 and the announcement of a one-third size reduction of the armed forces in 1960. Yet Khrushchev is also well known for sending troops to suppress the Hungarian revolution in 1956, the exacerbation of tensions with the West during the Berlin crisis in 1961, nuclear brinkmanship during the Cuban Missile crisis in 1962, and an expansionist policy of building a global camp of socialist supporters.

It is hard to know how far Khrushchev would have gone with the reforms were he to continue, but in 1964 a faction of newly mobilized conservatives led by Leonid Brezhnev ousted him from power. The new group had no interests in continuing with the reforms but was equally uninterested to revive the Stalinist system. They succeeded in defeating Khrushchev because they represented the newly formed majority of those comfortable with the status quo and uncomfortable with change. The necessary revenue for stabilizing the system domestically was available from selling oil. The international environment was also not conducive to change. Soviet economic experiments

encouraged Eastern European nations to demand a greater openness that, in Soviet minds, could have led to increased Western influence in the region. The new leadership was so impressed by the West's determination to undermine Soviet influence in the world that the Kremlin ordered an increase in defense spending by 40% during 1965–1970 and continued to keep it high thereafter.[37]

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The Transition

6

The Soviet Breakup

The four people most responsible for the collapse of the Soviet communism are Leonid Brezhnev, Boris Yeltsin, Leonid Kravchuk, and especially Mikhail Gorbachev.

JACK F. MATLOCK JR., US ambassador to the USSR[1]

THE BREAKUP OF the Soviet system is reminiscent of the tsarist system's disintegration. Although the two systems differed in composition of social forces, political ideology, and degree of violence, their decline can be attributed to similar structural conditions. Above all, these conditions included the country's progressive economic backwardness relative to the Western world and growing pressures from the class of professionals and intellectuals at home. However, it was ultimately flawed leadership that turned the system's decline into collapse. Instead of settling for a gradual state-controlled reform, Mikhail Gorbachev and his comrades launched a revolutionary transformation and dismantled the very strong state system that they were attempting to preserve. Rather than mitigating the growing external and internal pressures on the system, the Soviet leaders exacerbated their politically destabilizing effects and lost control over the country's development.

The Structural Conditions

The Soviet economic decline was made visible in the 1970s. Industrial production and productivity rates were slowing. The country became the largest importer of grain in the world and was dependent on the West for its bread. The Soviet state was heavily subsidizing its domestic needs—including agriculture—and foreign policy by relying on large reserves of oil and natural gas and by taking advantage of growing world energy prices. Indeed, throughout the 1970s, the country's production and exports of energy increased several times, becoming the key source of total hard currency earnings.

Table 6.1 Gross National Product for USSR and United States, 1960–1985 (%)

	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985
USSR	4.8	4.9	3.0	1.9	1.8
United States	4.6	3.0	2.2	3.4	2.5

Source: David Kotz and Fred Weir, *Revolution from Above: The Demise of the Soviet System* (London: Routledge, 1997), 42.

The steady decline of energy prices since the early 1980s was immediately felt by the overall Soviet economy, as it no longer could compete with Western rates of growth (see Table 6.1). The economy of the USSR was already heavily militarized, with some estimating the defense budget at 20% of the gross national product or even higher.[2] Such an economy experienced the difficulties of sustaining an arms race with the West. In the meantime, the West, led by the United States, was determined to make it even harder for the Soviets to compete economically. The policy of detente pursued in the 1970s was replaced by that of containment and defeat of the Soviet "evil empire" through an arms race competition. After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the West engaged in a new military build-up and opposed the ratification of SALT II, and the United States deployed nuclear missiles in Europe. In 1983 Ronald Reagan announced the Strategic Defense Initiative, also known as the Star War program, in a determination attempt to undermine Soviet economic and military capabilities.

Internally, the Soviet system was experiencing pressures from the growing middle class of professionals and intellectuals in Russia and the non-Russian republics. The Soviet middle class grew stronger during the 1960–1986 period. During this time, the proportion of highly educated and qualified urban specialists had increased fourfold. The overall number of urban dwellers in the total population had grown by over two-thirds by some calculations.[3] In the 1970s, the share of skilled workers, engineers, and intellectuals increased several times relative to the 1950s. However, the Soviet middle class was progressively pessimistic regarding its living standards.[4] More materialistic than the rest of society, the class of professionals was dissatisfied with the state's unwillingness to initiate change. Many representatives of this class were in touch with the outside world's technological developments, and their perceptions of the world grew to conflict with those of the Communist party nomenklatura and hard-line military. Increasingly, the middle class supported accommodation, not confrontation, with the outside world and

expected reforms in the rigid economic and political system. Although the Soviet system's resources were far from exhausted, the anticipation of and the eagerness for change was already in the air.

Related to the aspirations of the middle class were the growing ambitions of local peripheral elites within the Soviet state. Aspiring to a greater status within the system and better living standards for local nationalities, local elites were increasingly dissatisfied with the overly centralized nature of the state. The Soviet Union was an empire, in which the center effectively controlled the sovereignty of peripheral republics. The Kremlin, rather than Russia and Russians, played the role of the center; in many ways, Russia was just as heavily exploited by the authorities for the sake of maintaining the empire's economic and political cohesion. Although the Soviet authorities maintained the principle of representation of indigenous nationalities in the power structures, they also relied on political coercion, economic redistribution, and forceful migration—all the traditional tools of empire building. Yet the principle of nationalities' representation developed and reinforced the sense of peripheral distinctiveness from the empire. Historically, it prepared the ground for nationalist mobilization during a period of imperial decline, particularly among those republics that had developed a sense of a national self before incorporation into the Soviet empire. Nationalism therefore served as a rational strategy for pressuring the system for additional opportunities for the local population.

Gorbachev and the Misguided Reforms

As in the second half of the 19th century, growing economic backwardness required a course of moderate foreign policy and internal reform of the Soviet system. As previously, this course required the preservation of a strong state and was difficult to sustain. After the twenty years of Leonid Brezhnev's era of lavish oil-based expenses, corruption, and lack of reforms, the system was in dire need of change. The challenge was to release society's initiative while preserving guidance over the process of reforms. In particular, the system was to be made less ideologically driven and less centralized in the areas of economy and center–periphery relations. Given the size and complexity of the system, it was equally essential for the state to remain in control over the process of change. For a successful systemic transformation to take place, the strong state had to be modified, not dismantled.

After being elected the general secretary of the Communist Party, Gorbachev moved cautiously and first proposed the strategy of accelerating

scientific and technological progress as a way to improve the state of the Soviet economy. His initial coalition of support was fairly broad and included members of the industrial, military, party, and academic establishment. Although Gorbachev's idea of acceleration brought little practical results, the new leader used the momentum that he gained to advance his more radical vision of economic, political, and international changes known as Perestroika. By introducing Perestroika, he did not mean to replace the Soviet system with one similar to that of the West. Gorbachev traced his origins to the late Lenin's notion of coexistence with capitalism, and he kept emphasizing that his project was a development, not abandonment, of socialism. By capitalizing on "socialist values," he meant to engage ideologically motivated members of Soviet society and eventually bring the system closer to the model of Scandinavian societies, in which democracy was combined with strong egalitarian principles in the economy.

The problem was less with the vision than with the implementation. The new leader lacked a strong team of committed socialist reformers. Preoccupied with the foreign policy revolution known as the New Thinking, he also did not attend to the needs of domestic transformation to the extent necessary. As a result, Gorbachev had little to show to those expecting practical results from Perestroika and soon began to lose support of both elites and ordinary people. As far as the reform process was concerned, he consistently lacked initiative, which allowed his opponents to mobilize and attack him as an inefficient leader. Partly because of his poor sense of timing and his lack of strategy to implement his vision, the leader of Perestroika made three fatal mistakes, each undermining his ability to stay in control while reforming the country.

His first mistake was a lack of flexibility in introducing a mixed economy and the premature abandonment of the foundation of the old system—state orders. Reforming the economy was especially important, given the people's high expectation of improvement in this area. However, while entertaining the idea of a mixed economy, Gorbachev was fearful of introducing private property in the rural or other economic sectors. He was afraid that private property would lead to a capitalist system at home, subverting what he saw as the accomplishments of socialism. For instance, in September 1990, several Soviet and Western economists developed the plan "500 Days," which included economic restructuring, privatization, and the active involvement of foreign capital. Gorbachev backed away from the plan as leading to the restoration of capitalism. Unlike his more pragmatic teacher, Vladimir Lenin, who was not afraid of large foreign concessions and a "dual economy"

with a relatively large private sector during the post–civil war reconstruction, Gorbachev proved to be a much less flexible reformer. As a result of his hesitancy, even a mixed economy, in which only small and medium businesses are in private hands, never appeared.

Instead, he championed the idea of cooperative or shared forms of property. He hoped that the new, cooperative property structure would eliminate the Soviet-style economic inefficiency and provide the necessary incentives for production. In 1988, the Law of State Enterprise came into effect and replaced state orders with nonbinding control figures. The effect was the opposite of what was expected. By 1988, an economic slowdown and a dramatic worsening of living standards was obvious to everyone. Although the economy was growing at the rate of 2.2% after the cyclical decline of the early 1980s, it began to decline again from 1987 to 1989 and then collapsed after 1989 (see Table 6.2). The economy that for decades had been state-regulated had not yet developed market-based incentives and was now in a free fall. The collapse of the economy was a likely reaction to the vacuum of power resulting from the abolishment of state orders.

The second mistake was to allow democratization to discredit the central leadership of the country. By 1989, Boris Yelstin, a former provincial party secretary, emerged as the leader of the pro-Western opposition to Gorbachev. Supported by some ethnic republics, politicians around Yeltsin were attracted to the "Western" model of development and disappointed in Gorbachev's "socialist" character of reform. With the Eastern European revolutions

Table 6.2 Growth Rates for Soviet Economy, 1985–1991

	Western estimates (Gross National Product) (%)	Official Soviet Data (Net Material Product) (%)
1985	1.8	3.2
1986	4.1	2.3
1987	1.3	1.6
1988	2.1	4.4
1989	1.5	2.5
1990	−2.4	−3.9
1991	−12.8[a]	−15[a]

[a]Estimate excludes Georgia and the Baltic republics

Source: David Kotz and Fred Weir, *Revolution from Above: The Demise of the Soviet System* (London: Routledge, 1997), 75.

under way, reality was slipping away. The spring 1989 elections in Poland and Hungary brought to power anti-communist forces, and November 1989 saw a key symbol of the Cold War, the Berlin wall, come down. The old system was largely discredited, and Gorbachev was increasingly looking like its symbol, rather than a progressive reformer. Although the leader of Perestroika initiated the abolishment of the Communist Party monopoly in the political system, he failed to get himself elected by popular vote. Instead, Gorbachev held the position of president as elected by the Congress of People's Deputies. In the meantime, his chief political opponent, Yeltsin, was elected president of the Russian Federation in June 1991. It was too late for Gorbachev to be elected by popular vote. He was again two steps behind the country's change.

Gorbachev's final mistake had to do with reforming the nationalities. Given the excessively centralized nature of relationships between Moscow and the Soviet republics, changing the Soviet territorial power structure should have been high on Gorbachev's list of priorities. Yet until the early 1990s, he failed to address the problem, and his way of dealing with imperial decline and the nationalities crisis presents another illustration of how naïve and divorced from power considerations his ideas were. Gorbachev failed to recognize the Soviet Union as an empire and simply did not see the need for major power decentralization. By not reacting to national uprisings in a timely and systematic manner, he lost valuable time. Only in March 1990 did he raise the question of a new union treaty as a way to avoid political disintegration. By that time, nationalists in the Baltic republics and elsewhere had been active for more than three years. Six republics—the Baltics, Georgia, Moldova, and Armenia—announced their intent of nonparticipation in the new union treaty, and Russian liberal critics of Gorbachev were already debating the idea of a confederation. Later, the leader of Perestroika himself admitted that he "underestimated the strength of national feelings and aspirations."[5]

Although Gorbachev's nationalities vision had broad popular support, it was a power struggle of elites that determined the fate of the Soviet Union. During the March 1991 referendum on the future of the new union, which was conducted in all of the Soviet republics except the Baltics, Armenia, Georgia, and Moldova, 147 million people voted, and 76.4% approved the preservation of the union. The wording of the question was as follows: "Do you support the preservation of the union as a renewed federation of sovereign republics in which the rights of a person of any nationality are fully guaranteed?"[6] But the referendum took place in the context of Gorbachev's struggle against liberal elites. Yelstin's umbrella organization, Democratic Russia, openly called

for the dissolution of the Soviet Union and even tried (unsuccessfully) to convince Yelstin to campaign for a "no" vote in the referendum. Liberals-turned-nationalists presented the Soviet Union as an "empire" that was to be dismantled for the sake of Russian prosperity. Throughout the political campaigns of 1990 and 1991, Yelstin had advanced the "Russia-victim" argument, and it was his advisors who eventually wrote the scenario of dissolving the union.

As events were taking an increasingly unpredictable direction, Gorbachev's coalition was collapsing, and he was left without the required support for reform. Revolutionary changes in the country were polarizing, making it impossible to sustain the originally broad coalition for change. Conservative members of the coalition increasingly viewed Perestroika as an attempt to destroy the socialist state, and they opposed reforms with growing vigor. On the other hand, liberals were radically inclined. Initially supportive of Gorbachev, they now felt that the leader of Perestroika was too slow and inconsistent in his policies. Their impatience with the pace of Gorbachev's changes grew and eventually led to another coalition for radicalization of reforms. The new coalition included representatives of the Soviet middle class, liberal intellectuals, and some party nomenklatura, all of whom wanted a decisive break with the old system. By 1990, the latter, alongside the non-Russian nationalist elites, turned decisive supporters of Yeltsin's calls for abandoning socialism in favor of capitalism. Many of them had already owned their businesses or sought to privatize the state-controlled wealth.

The Ruins of the Soviet State

Perestroika went through three increasingly uncontrollable stages of development. The first stage (1986–1987) was associated with Glasnost and liberalization from above, when the state encouraged an open public debate about the nation's past and future. In the second stage (1988–1990), the state began to lose control over the process of reforms. In 1988, when Gorbachev was elected president of the Soviet state, he became increasingly unable to command the same social support. Yeltsin, whom Gorbachev dismissed in 1987, emerged as the leader of the pro-Western opposition. In 1989, Article 5 in the Soviet Constitution, which cemented the role of the Communist Party in the political system, was abolished. Throughout the USSR, parliamentary elections took place that severely undermined the position of the communists. In 1990, nationalist slogans became dominant within the national republics—including Russia—proclaiming the sovereignty of their laws over those of

the center. At the final stage, lasting through 1991, pressure on Gorbachev increased to such an extent that it was impossible for him to sustain his course of reforms.

During the last stage of Perestroika, Gorbachev tried to make tactical concessions to conservatives, but he was not successful. In early 1991, Soviet troops cracked down on rebellious Lithuania and Latvia, which might have been Gorbachev's way of reaching out to conservatives.[7] Liberals in Russia widely associated the crackdown with Gorbachev. However, in March he initiated a referendum on the future of the Soviet Union and used its results to schedule the official ceremony to sign the new union treaty among the nine remaining republics on August 20. To conservatives the 9 + 1 outcome—with nine standing for the republics and one being the center—was unacceptable and meant a de facto breakup of the old Soviet state. A conservative coup was launched in August to prevent the scheduled signing of the new union treaty between the center and nine republics, but it only made Soviet disintegration inevitable. Nationalism of the republics' political leadership then reached its highest degree, with Russia and Ukraine playing particularly grave roles. Ukraine held its own referendum, which the republic's leader Leonid Kravchuk interpreted as a mandate to opt out of the 9 + 1 process. Finally, on December 25, 1991, Russia–Ukraine–Belarus concluded a separate treaty to create the Commonwealth of Independent States without consulting the center. In response, Gorbachev resigned.

All the difficulties of the reforms notwithstanding, the Soviet breakup was not inevitable. Structural arguments about the country's economy and center–periphery relations are incomplete and must be complemented by an understanding of the process and agency of the system's collapse. Liberal arguments about the incompatibility of socialism and a strong state model with economic development[8] overlook the fact that the Soviet economy's potential was not exhausted. In 1988 the economy registered a potential for recovery (see Table 6.2) and collapsed largely in response to the misguided removal of state orders. The arguments about nationalism as the cause of the Soviet breakup are even less appealing. Even in the spring of 1991, when Gorbachev's support was at its lowest during the years of reform, 76% of the population of the nine republics approved his vision of a renewed union. The overall support for a transnational rather than an ethno-national community was strong. Even well after the Soviet breakup, many Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Kazakhs, and others continued to regret the disintegration of that state and/or favor some way of preserving the cultural community in the former Soviet space.

It is therefore wrong to present Gorbachev as a power calculator whose main concern was to save the Soviet system from defeat in the Cold War.[9] He hardly needed to initiate Perestroika for power purposes, as the old system could have survived for another generation or so.[10] Nor did he believe when he came to power that the Soviet economy was in serious trouble. Gorbachev could have continued to enjoy power without introducing any changes, or he could have introduced limited measures to reform the economy and fight corruption, as favored by his predecessor Yuri Andropov and the majority of the leadership. Instead he initiated what he himself liked to refer as a "social revolution."

Critical to the understanding of the Soviet breakup is an analysis of the role played by the system's leadership. Both Brezhnev and Gorbachev are responsible for some choices that made it at first difficult and then ultimately impossible to preserve the system. Already in the early 1980s, Brezhnev's Politburo decided to maintain defense expenditures at the level necessary to compete with the United States and other Western countries. Such an orientation of strategic parity, including the response to Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative, could only serve to further undermine the Soviet's energy-dependent economy. Such an unsustainable position was reversed only under Gorbachev. By introducing the notion of military sufficiency, the leader of Perestroika made a case for reevaluating Soviet defense expenditures and providing the basis for terminating the arms race in which the Soviet Union had been previously heavily involved. Clarifying the new approach, Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze argued that attempts to reach military parity with all potential enemies were in fact against Soviet national interests.[11]

However, although Gorbachev initiated revolutionary changes in foreign policy, he did not give sufficient attention to reforms at home. As a result, he failed to deliver on many of his international initiatives and ultimately lost control of the state. His overly ambitious foreign policy undermined reforms at home in three principal ways. It diverted resources; it diluted the focus on domestic changes; and—by opening the country widely to influences of modernity—it undermined the cohesiveness of the existing semi-traditionalist community. The diversion of resources was all the more troubling when Western nations did not support many of Gorbachev's initiatives—on nuclear disarmament, the abandonment of the principle of deterrence, the non-use of force and nonintervention in the internal affairs of other states, and the strengthening of the United Nations. The New Thinking also did little to improve living standards at home, and it did not result in the expected active participation of the West in reforming the domestic economy. Until the heavily centralized

economy was reformed, it was not realistic to expect considerable Western participation. Nevertheless, the leader of Perestroika kept going with his own agenda of unilateral withdrawals and military concessions. Believing that his efforts would somehow be rewarded and appreciated externally and at home was naïve, and he rapidly lost important international bargaining chips in promoting his agenda as well as domestic support for his course.[12]

This diluted focus proved costly. Trying to revolutionize foreign policy simultaneously with fundamental reforms in the economy, political system, and center–periphery relations was impossible. Priorities should have been chosen, and such priorities should have been domestic, rather than external. The harder Gorbachev pushed for foreign policy changes, the less control he seemed to have left at home. First, in 1988, he lost control over the economy after replacing state orders with nonbinding control figures. Then he lost control over the political situation after his leading opponent, Boris Yelstin, was elected president of Russia—first by the parliament and then by popular vote—while Gorbachev remained an essentially nonelected politician. Before 1989, Gorbachev still had a chance to acquire more domestic legitimacy and strengthen his status as the Soviet president through nationwide elections; after that, such an opportunity was no longer available. By not dealing with the nationalities crisis in a timely manner, he further worsened his domestic standing, and the public had difficulty trusting his course. Symptomatically, during 1988–1989 the percentage of those viewing nationalities' relations as worsening increased from 38% to 72%, and in 1989, 30% of the respondents thought that a future civil war was likely.[13]

Finally, the revolutionary foreign policy undermined the cohesiveness of the Soviet nation and directly contributed to the breakup of the USSR. By aiming for the West's support and recognition, it included itself in the arena of modern Western nation states, making it increasingly difficult to discourage Soviet ethnic republics from embarking on nationalist projects. Soon after the beginning of Perestroika, nationalists were openly referring to the Soviet Union as the last empire in the "age of decolonization." By initiating Glasnost and democratization, Gorbachev provided nationalists in Russia and other republics with the required channels for political mobilization. The organization of mass demonstrations in the Baltic republics and the elections to national parliaments of those who saw the future only in terms of complete independence greatly facilitated the course that undermined the Soviet Union. In the meantime, Gorbachev's own vision made little room for timely changes in nationalities policy. Despite mounting evidence of strong secessionist sentiments displayed by several republics, he kept insisting that

the republics formed a natural historical unit and that they should be "grateful" to the Soviet Union for their social and economic development. Such "New Thinking" undoubtedly stimulated peripheral nationalism. Although public support for the preservation of the union was sound, the extreme polarization of the political space by elites deprived Russia of a chance to reformulate its transnational identity.

To summarize, the breakup of the Soviet system resulted less from structural factors and more from failures of leadership. The course of a semi-isolationist foreign policy and moderate reforms at home was never tried in earnest. Unlike Nicholas II, Gorbachev did not involve the country in an unnecessary war and deserves credit for negotiating the end of the Cold War. However, like Nicholas, the leader of Perestroika failed to attend to the country's domestic needs and carry out a coherent program of internal reforms. His general attempt to move from a single-party system, empire, and command economy to a system based on a strong presidency, a more decentralized union, and a mixed economy was worthy of support, yet it lacked both commitment and an implementation strategy. As a result, the last Soviet "tsar" lost control by failing to develop a vision comparable to the historically promising models of state-controlled transformations initiated by Alexander II, Sergei Witte, and Pyort Stolypin.

Recommended Sources

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7

The Smuta of the 1990s

[Yeltsin] leaves behind him great deeds to the benefit of his country and serious mistakes. . . . [He was] a tragic figure.

MIKHAIL GORBACHEV[1]

Yeltsin and the New Social Coalition

Boris Yeltsin's views on the transformation of Russia were largely formed by the country's first pro-Western movement. The more that Perestroika stagnated, the more active the late-Soviet liberals became in challenging Gorbachev's indecisiveness and ineffectualness as a reformer. Made up predominantly of intellectuals, the soon-to-be-called Democratic Russia movement needed someone like Yeltsin as its leader. Elected to the Congress of People's Deputies in 1989, Yeltsin formed the Inter-Regional Group of Deputies, which, along with a number of prominent intellectuals, was highly critical of Perestroika. In addition, Yeltsin's biography was that of a common man who rose to prominence—from construction worker to regional party secretary—mostly due to his individual talents, such as his charisma and strong personal drive. Selecting him as the leader was an excellent choice in terms of assisting Democratic Russia with changing its image from that of a narrow-based intellectual club to a popular movement with broad public support. Democratic Russia could now challenge Gorbachev from the perspective of the larger society.

With Russian Westernizers, Yeltsin came to believe in the bright future of his country's capitalist and democratic transformation. From his perspective, the Soviet Union was a departure from the world's developmental path: Russia needed to become a part of Western civilization, which was perceived as the only viable and progressive civilization in the world. The end of the Cold War seemed to have reinforced this view. The West emerged as powerful and cohesive, whereas Soviet Russia was collapsing both politically and economically. Many Western commentators were in a self-congratulatory

mood, contributing to the perception of the worldwide ascendancy of Western values and institutions. Francis Fukuyama's argument about the "end of history" as the worldwide ascendancy of Western-style liberal capitalism captured the vision dominant in American and European policy circles.[2] When the Soviet Union indeed collapsed, the leading establishment journal *Foreign Affairs* issued the verdict that "the Soviet system collapsed because of what it was, or more exactly, because of what it was not. The West 'won' because of what the democracies were—because they were free, prosperous and successful, because they did justice, or convincingly tried to do so."[3] It was this fundamental belief in the superiority of the Western system that shaped the minds of Yeltsin and his domestic supporters. Consistent with the Western critics of socialism, they insisted that the Soviet Union could not be reformed and that Russia needed to adopt a Western capitalist model of development.

Yeltsin also strongly believed that Gorbachev personified the main obstacle to the country's decisive transformation toward capitalism and democracy. Many of Yeltsin's political actions could be explained by his ardent desire to remove Gorbachev from power. For example, his decision to resign from the Communist Party in July 1990 was an attempt to undermine Gorbachev's party base by challenging party members to follow the more radical reformist agenda. Yeltsin's separatism was also a way to dislodge Gorbachev as the only legitimate leader of the Soviet Union. A month before Yelstin resigned from the Party, his chaired Congress of People's Deputies adopted a declaration of sovereignty. From that point forward, Yelstin campaigned against the "dictatorship of the center" and ultimately sided with Ukraine and Belarus against Gorbachev and in favor of dissolving the USSR.

By the time Yelstin was elected president of Russia on June 12, 1991, he had assembled a powerful coalition of support both within the society and among elites. While the popular support of 57% of the vote was necessary to come to power, the backing of the elites was important to stay there and not be deprived of necessary governing resources. Yeltsin's coalition consisted of idealistic reformers and pragmatic representatives of the former communist nomenklatura. The reformers, such as Gennadi Burbulis, Yegor Gaidar, and Andrei Kozyrev, advocated radical policies that they hoped would bring Russia in line with the politico-economic standards of Western countries within a limited period of time. Typically, they talked about one or two years of necessary reforms, after which the living standards of Russians would considerably improve. Members of the former party nomenklatura realized that the return to the Soviet past was no longer possible. Some of them, especially those originating from the Komsomol (the youth branch of the Communist

Party) apparatus and directors of large state enterprises, had entered private business during 1989–1991 and now wanted to obtain control over the state property that had previously been managed under the leadership of the Central Committee. The goals of the reformers and the former nomenklatura were compatible: reformers wanted pro-Western capitalist reforms, and the party nomenklatura was eager to become a class of new capitalists.

Globally, a prominent member of Yeltsin's coalition was the West or, more precisely, those circles within the West that were critical of Perestroika as being insufficiently pro-Western and free market. These circles hoped to benefit from radical economic reforms in Russia and began to lend their support to Yeltsin while Gorbachev was still in power. For example, Defense Secretary Dick Cheney and head of the Central Intelligence Agency Richard Gates indicated their support for Yeltsin at the time when President George H. W. Bush still sought to strengthen the political position of Gorbachev. When the latter resigned, the West expected Yeltsin to follow Western recommendations regarding reforms in Russia. In turn, Yeltsin hoped that the Western nations would provide all the required material and moral support for reform when they saw how committed Russia was to its liberal transformation. After all, his team wanted to be fully integrated within Western civilization. Whereas Gorbachev saw value in diversity and multiple types of contribution to world development, the new Westernizers recognized only the triumph of one civilization (Western) over the rest of the world.

Privatization of the State

Having gained sufficient support, Yeltsin found himself in a position to act on his policy beliefs. Gorbachev's reforms had been effectively discredited, and the failed coup of August 1991 eliminated the appeal of the old communist ideas. The country's miserable economic performance was the most powerful force that influenced the new Russia's leadership. According to some calculations, relative to steadily growing Western economies, Russia's gross domestic product showed about a 60% cumulative decline from 1985 to 1992.[4]

Yeltsin advocated a strategy of radical economic reform, the so-called shock therapy, so that Russia's transition to a Western-style system would be both fast and irreversible. He planned a decisive action with no coordination with the former Soviet republics, which were perceived as a "burden (*girya*) on the Russian legs"[5]—too conservative to reform in the similar manner. In his speech to the Russian Congress of People's Deputies in the aftermath of the failed coup of August 1991, Yeltsin committed himself to the strategy of

shock therapy: freeing up all prices by the end of the year, rapid privatization of both industry and land, large reductions in state spending, and a tough monetary policy. He argued that Russia must forge ahead of the other republics and that, by so doing, it would provide an example for them.[6]

The outcomes of the reforms were different from what Russia's reformers expected. Although Yelstin's government indeed liberated most prices and conducted privatization during 1992, the radically pro-Western course produced not a free market model of capitalism but rather an oligarchical one. Under oligarchical capitalism, the economy was largely divided among those with business interests in the West. Prices were liberated, but liberalization of prices also meant hyperinflation and lost savings for members of the Soviet middle class. As standards of living declined dramatically over a very short period of time, most people found themselves impoverished. To consolidate support among influential elites, Yeltsin allowed some of the former economic and party nomenklatura to privatize the lucrative energy industry, thereby turning them into wealthy businessmen with Western trading preferences. A small number of individuals gained control over 50% of the economy. The remainder of the population received privatization vouchers worth 7,000 rubles (around $120) and was removed from any meaningful political participation.

By late 1992, the domestic economic situation further deteriorated, as shock therapy reforms put most of the population on the brink of poverty. The high degree of corruption and the social and economic decay resulting from the reforms created widespread disillusionment with the pro-Western agenda. The country came close to becoming a failed state[7] that was now preoccupied with survival as poverty, crime, and corruption made it a shadow of the industrialized country that it once was. In the meantime, the economy was largely controlled by former high-ranking party and state officials and their associates. The oligarchs played the role of the new, post-Soviet nomenklatura; they influenced many key decisions of state and successfully blocked the development of small- and medium-sized business in the country. However, unlike the American robber barons, the oligarchs created no wealth inside the country. Bankers, media tycoons, and owners of natural resources-based enterprises paid little taxes and kept most of their money outside the country.

The West played a key role in this flawed Westernization. Russia's leadership had reasons to expect outside assistance with the reforms. Yeltsin's team directly linked the idea of radical reform to that of a strategic partnership with the West; and the calculation was that the latter would be instrumental in

implementing the former. The argument was made that in the contemporary post–Cold War world, Russia should stop worrying about military power and geopolitics and instead invest its resources in the creation of a modern economy and political system. Russia hoped that the Western nations had finally recognized it as one of their own and would therefore invest the required resources in Russia's transition. For instance, in addressing a joint session of the US Congress in June 1992, Yeltsin saw no reason to hide his expectations for massive external assistance in reforming the country's economy. In dramatic language he linked US aid to Russia's only chance for survival:

> There will be no second try. . . . The reforms must succeed. . . . If we [that is, you Americans] do not take measures now to support Russia, this will not be a collapse of Russia only, it will be a collapse of the United States, because it will mean new trillions of dollars for the arms race.[8]

The calculations of Yeltsin and Kozyrev that the West would recognize Russia as its own and provide all the necessary assistance to integrate it into its midst proved to be flawed. Although the Western governments provided some substantial financial aid to Russia and were willing to cooperate in matters of security and arms control, these measures did not meet the existing, highly inflated expectations of Western assistance. In addition to being insufficient, such assistance was also misguided. Instead of encouraging a social safety net and the rule of law in the process of fundamental structural transformation, the West demonstrated its primary interest in encouraging the destruction of the previous economic system. The Western side preferred to develop relationships with the narrow and corrupt ruling elite, while simultaneously pursuing policies of containing Russia in security issues. Trying to rally domestic support around the expectations of Western assistance was therefore unrealistic. Russia developed a considerable dependence on Western lending agencies, yet the outside credit and investment were too negligible to buttress the credibility of the liberal Westernist vision, let alone transform Russia's institutions. In addition, some influential foreign policy experts in the West spoke of "the premature partnership" with Russia,[9] which came as a cold shower to Russia's leadership.

As radical reforms and partnership with the West were failing to bring any visible improvements in people's living standards, society was becoming disillusioned and skeptical. According to one poll, public support for the US model of society fell from 32% in 1990 to 13% in 1992, more than two-thirds.[10] In addition to a drastic decline in living standards, Russians experienced a

growing sense of vulnerability to external threats. Military conflicts in the Russian periphery, the disintegration of the USSR, and the prospects of NATO expansion toward Russia's borders added to the already wounded sense of national pride. Russians were now increasingly blaming the West for the failed economic reforms. In 1995, 44% of the elites and 75% of the population believed that the economy was essentially in foreign hands.[11] A number of those viewing the West as seeking to weaken Russia also increased. The biggest demonstration of declining support for Yeltsin's policies came during the December 1993 parliamentary elections, when liberal parties lost to those of nationalist orientation.

Under the new geopolitical and economic situation, a powerful opposition to Yeltsin's course emerged, which included military industrialists, the army, security services, and economic managers with strong ties to the ex-Soviet republics. The members of the new coalition united under the leadership of Yevgeni Primakov, who was at the time the head of the Foreign Intelligence Service, and pressured the state for changes in policy. The group had no faith in the West's willingness or ability to integrate Russia and instead advocated a stronger state role in preserving security and conducting less painful economic reforms.

In responding to the opposition, Yeltsin sought to gain distance from the oligarchs and rebuild his ties with the security community within the political class. In 1993, he attended a congress of military industrialists, the Civic Union, thereby acknowledging the organization's significance. After the disastrous elections, Yeltsin initiated an Agreement of National Accord signed by most leaders of the political parties. Then in late 1994—partly in his bid for support of the army elite—Yeltsin made a decision about military intervention in Chechnya. His initially highly pro-Western foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev supported the decision and even demonstratively resigned from his parliament's faction Russia's Choice, which opposed the intervention in Chechnya. In late 1994, Kozyrev himself was removed from office and replaced by his prominent critic and the father of Russia's new Statism, Primakov. Primakov's appointment was symbolic. As the *Financial Times* editorialized, of all the possible successors to Kozyrev, Primakov was "probably the least welcome in Washington. By selecting him, President Boris Yeltsin has signaled that he cares more about assuaging nationalism at home than soothing US fears."[12]

Yeltsin was trying to rebuild the state while continuing with reforms, yet he lacked both vision and capacity. He now not only had doubts about the vision of market reforms but was also wary of the semi-Soviet ideas of the

opposition. He resented his dependence on the oligarchs but needed their resources to be reelected and stay in power. The state's dependence on the continuation of the liberal economic reforms and assistance from the West became impossible to ignore.

Primakov, who moved from the position of foreign minister to that of prime minister, did what he could to restore the state's independence and capacity. But, by the time of his arrival, Russia's foreign debt and domestic budget deficit figured prominently. The debt approached its heaviest in 1999, when Russia had to pay $17.5 billion when its domestic budget was around $20 billion.[13] The budget deficit—primarily the result of the government's inability to collect taxes—was consistently sizable since the beginning of Yeltsin's economic reforms (see Table 7.1). The government was desperate to find noninflationary ways to reduce the deficit and to restructure and reschedule the growing debt. Room for political maneuvering was severely limited, and the government continued the practice of borrowing from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In turn, the IMF required tight conditionality and secured a more politically compliant Russia. For all its talk about depoliticized relations with countries/recipients, the political side of the IMF–Russia relationship was always visible. The 1995–1996 lending, for example, was conducted in the context of the approaching presidential elections, in which Yeltsin's victory was the number-one priority for the West. The Western intervention in Yugoslavia—against which Russia objected vehemently—took place as the Russian government was in the process of negotiating the restructuring of the approaching $17.5 billion payment.

Overall, Yeltsin's correction course produced little results. The state failed to gain a greater autonomy from the oligarchs and Western lending agencies. Primakov's efforts to engage non-Western countries in strategic partnerships with Russia also didn't work, as each of them was eager to trade with the United States and Europe. Efforts to rebuild ties with the former Soviet

Table 7.1 Russia's Government Revenue and Expenditure, 1992–1998 (% of Gross Domestic Product)

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Revenue	15.6	13.7	11.8	12.2	13.0	11.9	10.2
Expenditure	26	20.2	23.2	17.6	22.0	18.9	16.1

Source: Nigel Gould-Davies and Ngaire Woods, "Russia and the IMF," *International Affairs* 75, no. 1 (1999): 15.

republics could also not be considered successful mostly because the Russian oligarchs were not willing to invest in relationships in the former USSR. The energy companies, for example, grew strong but did not feel compelled to back up the state with their resources. The oligarchs had no confidence in Russia or its periphery and continued their policy of looting the country. The West-sponsored reform strategy was flawed, which was reflected in, among other things, the figures of the overall capital flight during 1992–1999, which exceeded the amount of financial assistance.[14] The so-called reformers in Russia were well aware of the state of affairs and yet were unable to say "no" to Western "assistance."

The First Chechnya War

Yeltsin's failure to reassert the state was no less visible in the area of territorial integrity. The decision to intervene in Chechnya came too late and, to a large extent, reflected, not a systematic plan to strengthen the unity of the state, but rather the Russian leader's desire to improve political ratings after the victory of nationalist parties during parliamentary elections in late 1993. When president of Chechnya, Dzhokhar Dudaev, unilaterally proclaimed Chechnya's independence in 1991, the new Russia's leader ignored it because he had already promised to give Russia's republics as much sovereignty as they "could swallow."[15]

In the meantime, the situation in the North Caucasian republic was increasingly difficult to control. During the Perestroika years, the democratic idea was hijacked by criminals and ethno-nationalists who saw a secessionist opportunity in the decline of the Soviet state and who prevailed in imposing their own political agendas. The ethno-nationalist leader Dudaev, himself a former Soviet general, was able to unseat the more union-minded Doku Zavgaev because separatism was gaining strength in the entire region and because Gorbachev was too late in offering a strong, unifying alternative.

Russia's Chechnya problem was a problem of rebuilding the state under growing ethno-nationalist pressures and under a regime that was itself of separatist origin and had come to power by toppling the central authority. By the time Yeltsin decided to intervene in Chechnya in early 1994, Dudaev was no longer in full control of the republic and was sharing power with organized crime. Political instability followed. Society fragmented and could no longer function as a whole. Russia's army—a state institution that was highly demoralized and humiliated during the protracted campaign to discredit the Soviet system—could not come near to restoring order and exacerbated the

situation by engaging in criminal activities, brutalities, and the destruction of the civilian infrastructure. Much has been written about human rights violations committed by the Russian army as well as by the Chechen side of the conflict.[16] As General Lebed, a veteran of Afghanistan and someone who helped to broker the 1997 peace agreement, once noted, "I have had occasion to see a lot of combat, and I affirm this fact: there are enough of scoundrels on both sides."[17]

All of this made it extremely difficult to restore order and for the state to govern in the republic. In 1997, the Kremlin signed a peace accord with the newly elected Chechen president, Aslan Maskhadov, in Khasavyurt, Dagestan. The accord stipulated Russia's withdrawal from Chechnya and the postponement of resolving its status for five years, but accord only lasted until 1999. Neither side could live up to its side of the bargain. Russia, which pledged funds "for restoring the Chechen Republic's socioeconomic complex,"[18] could not really deliver due to widespread corruption and embezzlement by federal and regional officials. Chechnya and its authorities showed little ability to restore order in the republic. In attempting to consolidate his power, the newly elected Maskhadov disbanded the parliament and even welcomed shariah courts but failed to make prominent warlords, such as Shamil Basaev, submit to presidential authority. Nor did Maskhadov show any ability to control the proliferation of criminal networks, kidnapping, and slavery.[19] Among the victims of kidnapping were two senior Russian envoys—who were supposedly under the Chechen president's personal protection—as well as Russian journalists and human rights activists who often sympathized with the suffering of the Chechens. In response to these developments, all major international relief and human rights organizations fled the North Caucasus.

As a result, Chechnya continued its descent into lawlessness and was increasingly becoming a training ground for criminals and terrorists, including those of international origins. In 1998, a number of prominent Saudi- and Jordan-born terrorists and al-Qaeda operatives, such as Ibn ul-Khattab and Abu al-Walid, made their way to Chechnya to organize terrorist infrastructures with Basaev. There was now a direct link between the international jihad and Chechen terrorism,[20] and different sources estimate four hundred to six thousand foreign fighters in the republic at the time.[21] With no progress in restoring the economy and unemployment estimates of up to 60%, terrorists had little difficulty recruiting young males among the local population. All the signs suggested that Chechnya as a viable entity with Maskhadov in charge no longer existed. In August 1999, when Chechen terrorists, led by

Basayev and the Arab fighter Khattab, had occupied parts of the neighboring republic of Dagestan—a prelude to future incursions into Russia in Moscow and Beslan—the Kremlin resumed military operations in the region.

The West again played a dubious role in Russia's efforts to reassert its territorial integrity. Initially Bill Clinton endorsed Yeltsin's intervention in Chechnya in 1994 by comparing it to the United States' determination to "save the union" during the civil war. However, the United States then shifted to oppose Russia's military intervention and insist that the Kremlin negotiate with Maskhadov, whom Washington perceived as a moderate and legitimate leader. US officials also maintained contacts with Maskhadov's government. The reason had partly to do with human rights violations in the Caucasus and partly with the United States' strategic interests. American leaders were determined to build a strong presence in the region by building a strategic energy pipeline from the Caspian Sea and by strengthening military cooperation with the states of the Caucasus. Russia's unilateral success could have meant a loss of political leverage on the part of the United States and other Western governments.[22]

To substantiate the narrative of a "heavy-handed" and "oppressive" Russia, Western media and pundits took the side of Chechnen separatists by presenting Russia as yet another colonial power—not principally different from the British, French, or Portuguese colonial empires. Whereas left-leaning observers showed the tendency to romanticize the oppressed colonial subjects, conservative geopoliticians seem to be especially concerned about a possible revival of the Russian state, which they viewed as equivalent to an empire.[23] The zero-sum approach—either empire or full independence—failed to recognize the most important challenge faced by the modern state, which is how to accommodate minorities and guarantee their rights without undermining the political viability and territorial integrity of the state itself. Self-determination is not viable if it comes at the cost of political instability, state disintegration, and the violation of human rights, which were all too evident in Chechnya.

Yeltsin's Legacy

A typical Westernist account of Boris Yeltsin is that of the father of Russia's democracy and market economy, who oversaw the country's imperfect transformation from centuries-old autocratic and imperial tradition to a modern nation. When Yeltsin passed away in April 2007, the main comment in the Western media was that he "ensured that the process led, albeit temporarily,

to democracy and liberal capitalism" and that "Russia was never as free as in the Yeltsin 1990s, before or since."[24]

Most Russians, however, view Yeltsin as a ruler who essentially squandered the comparative advantages of the Soviet era by destroying industry, undermining territorial integrity, and creating a class of super wealthy oligarchs that effectively monopolized control over the economy and political system. Intellectuals and politicians frequently refer to the Yeltsin era as an example of the Time of Troubles or state disintegration caused by failure of leadership and external invasion. In 2007, only 5% of the general public favored the Yeltsin era, whereas 34% chose the current situation and 47%, the Soviet era. Other polls reveal that to 70% of Russians the 1990s brought more negative than positive developments and that close to a majority (49%) believed that Yeltsin should stand trial for unlawful actions and abuse of power. A poll taken in 2012 showed that Russians continue to identify Yeltsin and Gorbachev as two of the least effective leaders of the country.[25]

Yeltsin was no villain who plotted to sell the country to special domestic or foreign interest groups. Nor was he a visionary liberator of Russia from its traditional institutions and political culture. Rather, as Gorbachev said, Yeltsin "leaves behind him great deeds to the benefit of his country and serious mistakes. . . . [He was] a tragic figure." The tragedy of Russia was that the transition from Soviet rule resulted in the emergence of a failing state, not new workable institutions and enduring freedoms. In Russia's modern political history from Alexander II to Nicholas II such a trajectory from reforms to state failure is not uncommon. Yeltsin understood the danger but was unable to address it. A man of intuition rather than intellect, he sensed that his policies of breaking up the USSR, nomenklatura privatization, and special deals with Russia's regions had the potential to put the nation on a path to further disintegration. However, as a revolutionary he was in no position to initiate processes of healing, reconciliation, and reconstruction. Yelstin's psychological crisis and prolonged bouts of depression while in the office shed light on how he really felt about taking his nation to "democracy." Before leaving office he asked his fellow citizens for their forgiveness "for having failed to live up" to their hopes. He found the courage to admit his failure, resign before his term expired, and pass power to a person who, he sensed, appreciated the importance of state recovery.[26]

Yeltsin's tragedy is that of a revolutionary destroyer turned statesman. While working to undermine the foundations of the Soviet state and remove Gorbachev from power, he went too far and could no longer control the process. Unlike Gorbachev, who lost control over the country because of his own

indecisiveness in reforming the system, Yeltsin was plenty decisive yet misguidedly so. Instead of attempting to rebuild relations with the non-Russian republics, he plotted behind Gorbachev's back to dissolve the USSR and promised to give Russia's republics as much sovereignty as they "could swallow." The political seeds of Chechnya's secessionism were planted here. By the time Yeltsin decided to intervene in Chechnya, it was already too late. What is tragic is not that he chose to intervene, as some liberal commentators have suggested, but rather that he did it late and without thorough preparation—relying on whispers from his security hawks in his entourage that the intervention would be quick and successful. The special deals with republics that followed and the "asymmetrical federalism" that emerged from those deals further indicated the desperation of a statesman who was trying to save an already sinking ship and was unable to assert his power.

Yeltsin's economic policies also betray his ardent desire to destroy the Soviet system by going to the opposite extreme—Western conservative shock therapy. The much needed macroeconomic stabilization came at the price of deindustrialization, a destroyed middle class, and increased dependence on foreign credit. The former Soviet nomenklatura and Western international organizations prepared the ground for reform, and all advice from moderates was brushed aside as—ironically—too conservative. Radicalism of reform appealed to Yeltsin's revolutionary instincts, and he did not hesitate to promise that Russia would reach the top-rank status of countries such as France, Germany, and the United States within a decade. Impatient, he also chose nomenklatura privatization as the fastest way to part with the Soviet structure of ownership. Both nomenklatura and foreign corporations profited handsomely from Yeltsin's economic policies. The former successfully converted power to property, quickly moving them to the rank of the wealthiest individuals on earth. The latter signed multiple potentially lucrative deals with the government to develop oil and gas fields—the so-called Production Sharing Agreements—according to which all profits went to them and not to the Russian government.

Yeltsin attempted to discipline oligarchs by unleashing generals Alexander Korzhakov and Mikhail Barsukov on them, but this was no longer effective. Although Yeltsin deeply resented oligarchs such as Boris Berezovski and Vladimir Gusinski, most of the media and the capital were in their hands, and attempts to intimidate them by raiding their offices only had a short-term effect. Yelstin could not re-create what he had been so eagerly destroying—workable state institutions. He targeted the Soviet system but hit the Russian state. It is no wonder that he lost popular support and the resources

for restoring control. After passing the constitution in a rigged vote and the disastrous showing of pro-Yeltsin's forces during the December 1993 elections, all he could do was to generate an emasculated agreement of National Accord and to signal his support for moderate critics of his rule associated with the Civic Union and the Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs. Deeply confused, he was still moving back and forth, adopting more statist steps associated with figures such as Yevgeni Primakov, yet worrying that the shift in policy would relegate himself to the shadows. In the meantime, the country kept falling apart, and the president felt compelled to summon back Berezovski, Gusinski, and the like to support his reelection bid in 1996. The revived dependence on oligarchs could only exacerbate the problems of Russia's collapsing statehood. As the oligarchs-controlled TV continued to humiliate the army and its performance in Chechnya, society's morale was deteriorating and the economy was stagnating. Yeltsin's efforts to initiate the search for a "national idea" under the circumstances generated little more than jokes.

In short, Yeltsin left a contradictory legacy. He made important accomplishments that each came at a heavy price, being byproducts of his struggle for power and personal survival. Among them are macroeconomic stabilization, the constitution, continued elections, and voluntary departure from power. Still, Yeltsin's main record remains that of a state destroyer, and that is how the Russian people remember him. He was an archetypical Russian ruler: decisive, authoritarian, mistrustful, and populist all at the same time. He could have made either a great revolutionary or a great leader of Russia. The tragedy of Russia and his personal tragedy was that he could not be both.

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The Revival

8

Putin's System

For Russians, a strong state is not an anomaly that should be gotten rid of. Quite the contrary, they see it as a source and guarantor of order and the initiator and main driving force of any change.

VLADIMIR PUTIN[1]

THE PROCESS OF recovering from the Smuta of the 1990s returned the Russian state to a cycle of consolidation. Russia's new leader, Vladimir Putin, had no desire or ability to mobilize the nation for a Peter the Great–or a Stalin-like project of development. In Putin's state-building, trends of centralization and balancing went hand in hand. Yet by the time he ended his second presidential term, the question emerged whether Russia could afford to continue in a gradual state-liberalization fashion.

Putin's Rise and Social Support

Yeltsin's decision to select Putin as his successor helped the latter to secure the support of the commercial elites, but the general public hardly knew him. Besides, Yeltsin's low popularity did not work in favor of Putin, who still had to prove himself worthy of public support. Two developments assisted Putin: a new threat from terrorism and economic recovery.

Intensification of terrorist activities in the Caucasus and worldwide revealed the Kremlin's inaction in the aftermath of the 1996 peace agreement with Chechen rebels. The newly elected leader of Chechnya, Aslan Maskhadov, failed to maintain order, and mass kidnapping and extortion by local warlords continued. In August 1999, Chechen rebels led by Shamil Basayev and the Arab fighter Khattab occupied parts of the neighboring republic Dagestan, in response to which the Kremlin resumed military operations in the region. Also in August, two bombs exploded in Moscow's

residential buildings killing hundreds of civilians. The sheer magnitude of violence outside the North Caucasus was unprecedented. Russians united behind Putin, who was running for president on the platform of "eradicating extremism" in Chechnya and reestablishing a "strong state" throughout the entire Russian territory. Initially, the popularity of then–prime minister Putin was at the level of only 2%, but in two months it jumped to 26% and, as the war in Chechnya progressed, it reached the unprecedented 58% mark in January 2000.[2] In March 2000, Putin was elected president in the first round by securing 53% of the vote.

The other important development was the relative recovery of the Russian economy after the August 1998 financial crisis and the new opportunities that the recovery was promising for the country. The growth was steady, and other indicators too were encouraging. Russia was also in a relatively advantageous position commercially. Its foreign trade was enjoying a structural surplus, and the economy was wide open for commercial operations. The share of foreign trade was around 50% of the gross domestic product, making the Russian economy, on that measure, about as open as Germany. Although the stock of foreign direct investment accumulated since 1989 remained low, rising world oil prices further provided Russia with new opportunities to explore.

Under these conditions, Putin sought to create new support for his rule on both the social and elite level. On the level of society, he sought to gain people's loyalty by extending to them political stability, new economic opportunities, and social services. Over the 2000–2005 period, the average Russian saw a 26% annual growth in his or her income, relative to only a 10% rise in that of the average Chinese.[3] As a result, the number of Russians who thought that the chosen development course in Russia was correct had been growing year by year. The middle class now constituted about 25% of the population. Even during the global financial crisis almost 80% of Russian remained satisfied with their living standards.[4] Putin saw his country as a paternalistic centralized state capable of adapting to a changing world under state leadership. In the tradition of Russian rulers, the priority is given to governability and the state's ability to exercise its power, whereas democracy comes second: "Our state and its institutions have always played an exceptionally important role in the life of the country and its people. For Russians a strong state is not an anomaly that should be gotten rid of. Quite the contrary, they see it as a source and guarantor of order and the initiator and main driving force of any change."[5]

On the level of elites, Putin wanted to engage the already established commercial groups of the Yeltsin era (oligarchs) and those with a background in security services. Both groups grew stronger in response to the rising terrorist

threat and the country's economic recovery. Because commercial elites often defended Russia's pro-Western identity, whereas military and security elites promoted a strong state, the new coalition was sometimes referred to as the alliance of oligarchs and siloviks or chekists (from the Russian *CheKa*, the original name of Bolshevik's security service). Commercial groups supported Putin for his vision of liberal economic development, whereas members of Russia's security elite valued his background in security service and his commitment to strengthening the state and social order. The relative recovery of Russian economy improved the position of the oligarchs, and the intensification of terrorist activities in the Caucasus and worldwide strengthened the positions of siloviks. In the new world context of both threats and opportunities, they each hoped to increase their influence on the president.

Putin's support was therefore tenuous. Strong economic growth was necessary to preserve the loyalty of the people. As for the elites, although most of them agreed on Putin as the preferred leader of the state, they were committed to principally different worldviews and pulled him in opposite directions. Putin was planning to take advantage of the coalition's fragility, while exercising his authority as he saw fit. Eventually, he hoped to transform the loose coalition into a more stable alliance that shared his pragmatic vision of Russia as a strong state playing by internationally accepted rules and norms of behavior. As a normalizer, he had no plans to restore the state's capacity to forcefully extract resources from the society.

Putin's Vision of the Russian State

Putin's grand strategy was to revive Russia's economic and military capacities as a great power to avert possible threats and to play a vital role in world politics. His vision combined elements of internationalization, economic liberalization, and power concentration. Putin's vision corresponded with views of the mixed social coalition and assisted the president in mobilizing elite support for his vision.

Internationalization was deemed necessary to address growing threats of terrorism and prevent falling behind in economic development. Like many Western leaders, he saw terrorism as a threat to the very system of modern of international relations. The emphasis on terrorist threats, of course, emanated from both inside and outside of Russia. At home, such an emphasis had its roots in the Chechen Shamil Basayev's and the Arab fighter Khattab's August 1999 occupation of parts of the neighboring republic of Dagestan as well as in suicide bombers' multiple attacks on Russians. Outside the country,

Putin found support in the horrific September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States in 2001. His support for Western efforts to fight international terrorism was therefore not tactical but derived from his fundamental beliefs. Putin also emphasized the economic nature of the contemporary world and the need for Russia to be successful in the geoeconomic struggle. In the president's own words, "The norm of the international community and the modern world is a tough competition—for markets, investments, political, and economic influence. … Nobody is eager to help us. We have to fight for our place under the economic sun."[6]

Economic liberalization too was essential and went hand in hand with internationalization. The state wanted to acquire a greater prominence in economic affairs, yet to make Russia more open, not more closed, to international competition. The most powerful oligarchs, such as Boris Berezovski, Vladimir Gusinski, and Mikhail Khodorkovski, were stripped of their economic empires, and the state consistently asserted itself in other key areas. It increased its share in leading energy companies, renegotiated production-sharing agreements with Western companies in some of the most lucrative oil fields in Siberia and the Far East, and aimed to increase state support for the banking, aerospace, automobile, and heavy machinery sectors. The state argued that the creation of such companies was necessary to position them for successful international competition. Russian officials also insisted on expediting the country's entrance to the World Trade Organization. Furthermore, Putin's strategy recognized the vital need of foreign investment, particularly from Western nations, for continuing high economic growth.

Finally, Putin saw power concentration as a key to his success. As someone who inherited an extremely weak state, he understood the importance of reviving the capacity to govern for Russia to become a full-fledged member of the global community. A believer in gradual integration with the world, Putin also perceived the need to remain a great power as a security necessity, citing Russia's volatile external environment and reminding his audiences that "during all of its times of weakness … Russia was invariably confronted with the threat of disintegration."[7] Putin's strategy was that of a dominant, not a dependent, state. A dominant state shapes policy outcomes by actively seeking to control social resources and coordinate the activities of key social players. The president viewed enhanced state power as necessary to assist the country in finding its niche in the global economy (hence his "fighting for our place under the economic sun"). While clearly important, a strong state was not a goal in itself but rather a tool for adapting to a changing world and improving the lives of ordinary Russians.

Despite the opinions of some Putin critics, his vision was not a project of a full-scale mobilization or empire-building. He had no desire or capacity to seek a Soviet-like system but wanted to build a new model of the strong state. His was a vision aimed at providing Russia with greater security and preparing for economic competition in world markets. Not a liberal and not willing to make Gorbachev- or Kozyrev-like concessions to the West, he also had no desire to challenge the Western nations and wanted to engage them in projects of mutual significance.

The One-and-a-Half-Party Dominance

To achieve his objectives, Putin could not rely exclusively on high economic performance and informal networks of power; he needed to build a formal base of political support. Relative to the USSR's party-state rule, Russia's ruling system under the 2000s is best described as a state-party rule. It was the state—or more precisely, Putin—that was behind the establishment of a dominant political party to assist in governing the country.

Unlike Yeltsin, Putin built a political party through which to rule. United Russia (UR) was born in 2001 out of the merger of two other mainstream parties that were especially successful in the 1999 elections to the State Duma. Although Putin continued to run for the presidency as an independent, his association with the party was unmistakable. Since 2003, he consistently headed the party's national lists in parliamentary elections and served as the UR's general manager and informal leader. With the communism–capitalism dichotomy receding into the 1990s, UR's main message was the defeat of terrorism in the Northern Caucasus, political stabilization, and economic prosperity.

Throughout the 2000s, Putin's consistently high popularity ratings made it possible for the party to win the majority of seats in the Duma. Indeed, throughout the 2000s the UR controlled close to two-thirds of parliamentary seats and experienced no serious difficulties in approving Putin's bills. In the majority of cases, the UR did not even need to enter a coalition with political parties of communist or nationalist orientation. Rather than being a multiparty system, it was a de facto one-and-a-half party system. This state of affairs was challenged only after the 2011 elections when the UR obtained 49% of the votes, relative to 64% in 2007.

In addition to Putin's popularity, two other factors contributed to the UR's dominance in the political system—the inability of Russia's liberals to unite and the aggressive use by the Kremlin of its administrative power. Russia's

liberals, including Yabloko and Union of Right Wing Forces, could not agree on a coherent strategy to challenge Putin. In 2007 the election threshold increased from 5% to 7%, which made it even harder for liberal parties to enter the Duma individually, without forming an alliance.

Another factor was the role played by the deputy head of presidential administration, Vladislav Surkov, charged with supervising ideology and the formation of political parties. Surkov worked to discourage development of independent political parties by intervening each time nationalists or liberals presented a serious challenge to the Kremlin. Only sufficiently loyal parties could grow, and such parties were already in the Duma. In 2005 Surkov contributed to undermining the rising nationalist politician Dmitri Rogozin who was positioning himself to become a candidate in the 2008 presidential elections. Rogozin's party, Rodina, was banned from participating in election to the Moscow City Duma on the basis of using ethno-nationalist slogans. In 2011, Surkov prevented the wealthy businessman Mikhail Prokhorov from trying to enter parliament as a new leader of the Right Cause party. By expecting the Right Cause to divert voters from growing opposition to the UR, Surkov initially supported Prokhorov. However, Surkov withdrew his support and masterminded Prokhorov's resignation from the party after he learned about Prokhorov's ambitions to run an independent populist campaign and position himself to enter the 2012 presidential race.

Surkov's policies reflected Putin's belief that the dominance of the UR was essential for governance and political mobilization. A believer in "manual control" during the country's economic transition, Putin soon moved to reestablish the UR's political mobilization potential. By mid-2011, the party began to lose its public ratings as it became increasingly perceived as run by unimaginative and corrupt bureaucrats. In response to this perception, Putin announced the formation of a new political movement called the Popular Front that would seek to incorporate fresh ideas from across the spectrum. As a result, new names accounted for 30% of those on the UR party list for election to State Duma in December 2011. Putin also sought to co-opt moderate nationalists. In the summer, he negotiated with the popular nationalist and representative to NATO Dmitri Rogozin, convincing him to run for Duma on the UR ticket. In part, Putin's calculations reflected fear of growing tensions between Russians and Muslim nationalities from the Northern Caucasus. The strong expression of such tensions was the riot of five thousand Russian nationalists and football fans on Manezh Square, Moscow, on December 11, 2010, against the release of five men suspected of murdering Russian football fan Yegor Sviridov. Other parties such as the leftist Fair Russia and the liberal Right

Forces received no similar assistance from the Kremlin. Indeed, the Kremlin was instrumental in ousting the leader of Fair Russia, Sergei Mironov, from the position of speaker of the Federation Council, thereby undermining the party's political chances.[8]

However, the decline of the UR's popularity continued. Despite all these preparations, the elections to Duma on December 4, 2011, amply demonstrated the public fatigue with the UR and its advocated policies. Even the official count recognized that the UR gained only 49% of the vote, a loss of 15% compared to 2007. In addition, the vote was widely contested across the country with critics of the UR insisting that it should have received only 27% to 30%. The rallies of protest were the largest since Mikhail Gorbachev's Perestroika years. During the election campaign, Putin distanced himself from the party that lost considerable support from the voters in the 2011 Duma elections. In April 2012, immediately before inauguration as president, Putin stepped down as the UR party chief.

The Post-Beslan Centralization

To be effective, the state-party system had to extend to Russia's regions. Before Putin's arrival, regional governors were elected and represented a politically mixed group from reformers to independents and communists. Governors also had an important measure of independence from the Kremlin by frequently monopolizing local political resources and getting themselves elected to the upper house of the State Duma, the Federation Council. Each region elected two representatives to the upper house, who received immunity from criminal prosecution and could not be removed by the Kremlin without the Federation Council's agreement. Putin's rule transformed this state of affairs by restoring the state's dominance in the regions, including reshaping the local political landscape.

The transformation had already begun in 2001 but was greatly facilitated by a terrorist attack in North Ossetia in September 2004. After downing two civilian airliners, terrorists took more than one thousand people hostage in a local school in Beslan. Chechen field commander Shamil' Basayev took responsibility for the incident, demanding the withdrawal of Russian troops from the territory of Chechnya. Ultimately, as the terrorists were in the process of releasing hostages, hundreds of women and children died. In the long list of terrorist attacks on Russian civilians, this was the worst. Putin came under heavy attack at home from both nationalist and liberal forces for not being able to prevent the terrorist attack and for choosing the "wrong" ways of dealing with the threat. Nationalists blamed him for not building a more

strongly centralized power, while liberals faulted Putin for missing a chance to negotiate with some elements within the Chechen separatist movement.

In response, Putin redoubled his efforts to centralize decision-making. In addition to stepping up counterterrorist activities and promising to hold new parliamentary elections in Chechnya, he proposed a series of steps to further reform the political system. Local governors were no longer to be elected; instead, they were to be nominated by the president and confirmed by local legislative bodies. Local elections were to be for nationally established political parties, whereas regionally based parties were banned. These measures helped to increase regional support for the UR. In the 2003 elections to the State Duma, the UR obtained 62% of the vote, and it was developing a strong presence in local legislatures as well. By the mid-2000s, the UR dominated the legislatures and city councils in most regions. By the 2007 State Duma elections, most governors joined the party and therefore had a direct incentive to ensure its best possible performance.[9] Finally, Putin strengthened the state administrative component by creating several large federal districts headed by presidential envoys. The envoys were personally loyal to Putin and shared his background in the security services. In addition to influencing governors' decisions, the envoy's responsibility was to control local power structures, including military, police, and prosecutors.

Putin's own public justification for the centralization reform had to do with external threats and was revealed in his first public statement after the terrorist attack in Beslan. After admitting Russia's inadequate defenses, he relegated partial responsibility for the Beslan incident to some unspecified foreign forces. In a thinly veiled reference to the West, Russia's president said, "Some want to tear off a big chunk of our country and others are helping them. They are helping them in the belief that Russia, as one of the greatest nuclear powers of the world, still poses a threat to them and, therefore, this threat has to be eliminated. Terrorism is their only tool."[10] Putin's rhetoric reflected his personal disappointment with the failure to engage the United States in the establishment of a counterterrorist front after September 11, 2001. Washington initially welcomed his pledge of important resources to help America in its fight against terrorism, but soon thereafter the United States deviated from counterterrorism by invading Iraq and launching the strategy of regime change across the globe.

With respect to Chechnya and Russia's fight with terrorism, the West acted as if it wanted to assist Putin in developing his conspiratorial thinking.[11] After Basayev and Khattab had occupied parts of Dagestan, Maskhadov failed to bring them under his control or stabilize Chechnya. He also continued

to promote the idea of Chechnya's independence. Nevertheless, the United States and European countries insisted on the Kremlin's negotiations with Maskhadov even as they officially supported Russia's territorial integrity. Following 9/11 the attitude of Western countries changed but not for very long. In less than a year, they were back advocating a "political settlement" with Maskhadov and denying—even after the Basaev-Khattab invasion of Dagestan—ties between the Chechens and Al-Qaeda. It appeared that the West was trying to have it both ways—enlist Russia as an anti-terrorist ally and reduce its position in the Caucasus. Determined to secure its access to Caspian oil and strengthen its geostrategic presence in the Caucasus, Western countries strengthened their ties with Georgia and remained suspicious of Moscow's intentions in the region. After the Kremlin engaged in efforts to empower local Chechens after Beslan, the United States refused to see that Chechenization was not principally different from the pacification efforts pursued by Washington in Iraq.[12]

The Role of Medvedev

In the light of the above-noted empowerment of the security services and state-party centralization, how can one explain Dmitri Medvedev's presidency following the end of Putin's two terms in 2008? At the end of Putin's second term, some pundits expected him to stay in power by finding a way to be reelected for the third term. Others thought that he would step down but promote a politician to succeed him. Two potential successors emerged, the more hawkish Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov and the more liberally minded Deputy Prime Minister Dmitri Medvedev.

The reason why Putin selected Medvedev as his successor remains disputed, with many observers arguing that it had to do with Putin's decision to return to power in 2012. According to this interpretation, Putin merely needed someone politically weak and indecisive to keep the seat warm for him. A more plausible explanation is that Putin wanted to restore the intra-elite balance between the liberals and the siloviks and extend the social contract to a growing middle class.

Preserving political unity within the Kremlin was the number-one challenge. After his arrival to power, Putin succeeded in pragmatically integrating the previously excluded security elites in the ruling class. The siloviks now expected that they would replace the old commercial group of Yeltsin's oligarchs and become the single decisive influence on Putin. Some analysts suggested that security elites indeed became dominant in influencing political

circles and the policymaking process, but in reality the state did not become a hostage to those influences. Putin's designation of Medvedev is an important testament to this. A lawyer by training, the latter worked with Putin in various capacities but was never affiliated with the siloviks' group. Medvedev's selection was meant as a step toward reaching consensus among powerful groups within the political class. The formally dualistic power structure that emerged after the 2008 presidential elections, with Medvedev as president and Putin as prime minister, was established to serve that objective.

The second expectation was that Medvedev would strengthen Russia's political system by reaching out to those skeptical of Putin's rule. At home they included the growing class of professionals in large cities with a liberal and cosmopolitan outlook. Outside Russia, Western leaders grew disappointed with Putin's assertive foreign policy style and hoped for a change. Soon, partly in response to the global financial crisis, Medvedev began to articulate a vision that was more of non-Putin constituencies at home and abroad. That vision included an economy liberated from dependence on energy exports, a more open political system, and stronger ties with Western nations. For instance, in his article "Go, Russia!" published in September 2009, Medvedev offered a highly critical assessment of the country's domestic conditions. By pointing to "a primitive economy based on raw materials and endemic corruption . . . , semi-Soviet social sphere, fragile democracy, harmful demographic trends, and unstable Caucasus," the new president posed a rhetorical question: "If Russia cannot relieve itself from these burdens, can it really find its own path for the future?"[13] His proposed solutions included the modernization of the economic and the political system, technological changes, and a modernization-based foreign policy.[14]

However, as time passed, contradictions within the Putin–Medvedev tandem developed. These contradictions reflected different perspectives and leadership styles. Ideologically, Putin favored a more controlled and UR-centered political system, whereas his protégé supported a competitive system and increased his distance from the UR. In the area of economy, Putin was comfortable with a patrimonial system, in which state officials were to sit on boards of the largest strategically important companies. Medvedev, however, viewed such practices as a source of corruption and in March 2011 ordered the removal of representatives of the state—most of them allies of Putin—from state company boards. Finally, Putin mistrusted the United States and other Western countries, whereas Medvedev showed himself open to working with them even on highly contentious issues such as sanctions against Iran or NATO's intervention in Libya.

As far as leadership style was concerned, Russia's political system had been uneasily accommodating two different approaches—Medvedev's detached incrementalism and Putin's engaged populism. While Medvedev continued to push for modernization of the country by making numerous public appearances, he laid out no clear plan for implementing his ideas. He also failed to develop a social coalition to support his modernization vision. His ratings were worse than Putin's and reflected the public understanding that Putin remained in charge within the tandem. In the meantime, Prime Minister Putin had not just the power levers in his possession but the initiative, skills, and the necessary support from the elite groups and the general public. He never contradicted his protégée's ideas but used every opportunity to demonstrate his "can do" qualities and build his base of support by keeping his loyalists in top jobs, actually assisting in forest fire extinguishing operations, attending rallies of his supporters, posing as a pilot and Harley Davidson rider, and issuing blistering criticisms of the United States.[15]

The external changes exacerbated a divide within Russia's political class and larger society. In response to the global economic crisis, the pro-Medvedev faction within the Kremlin advocated a sharper diversification of the economy, whereas others continued their support of energy corporations. Those supported by Deputy Prime Minister Igor Sechin prioritized the development of the energy and military sectors as opposed to the diversification highlighted by Medvedev. Importantly, Putin too was often sympathetic to the group's ideas.[16] The Arab Spring had the effect of deepening fears that similar developments could take place inside Russia and destabilize the existing political structure. As the presidential election was approaching, foreign investors too were divided, some showing signs of nervousness about political stability and leaving the country's markets.[17] Outside the Kremlin, the divide widened between successful professionals in large cities and those dependent on additional state assistance for survival during the economic crisis.

In September 2011, Putin responded to the growing divide by making public his decision to run for president. Before announcing it, he conducted a series of secret negotiations with Medvedev and several other members of the political class. Putin therefore continued to act as the power broker and mediator between competing groups within the Kremlin. With ratings of public support averaging 60% and control of the State Duma by his loyal UR party, Putin was confident that he would become the next president of the country. Quite possibly, the decision reflected Putin's skepticism regarding his protégé's vision and ability to act on his perspectives on the country's future. In releasing his presidential program, he spoke in general terms of Russia

becoming the fifth largest economy in the next few years, achieving food independence, creating jobs, improving living standards, improving the business climate, increasing taxes for the rich, and fully rearming the military. Increasing the system's openness or dismantling patrimonial institutions was not on Putin's list of immediate priorities.

Putin's decision was met with a mixed reaction. The siloviks welcomed the decision whereas Medvedev's supporters could not hide their disappointment. The public too was divided. Although many still supported Putin, the elections to Duma on December 4, 2011, amply demonstrated public fatigue with the UR and its policies. The participants were dissatisfied with the accomplishments of the Putin era and disappointed with its inability to deliver greater openness, the rule of law, and renewed economic confidence. Foreign investors, tired of the uncertainly of the Putin–Medvedev tandem, welcomed Putin's decision and expected more clarity in the rules of doing business in Russia.[18]

The Medvedev project therefore remained half-completed. The intra-elite balance of power between the liberals and the siloviks was restored, and the system was again stabilized on Putin's terms. However, this time it was the pro-Medvedev faction that felt increasingly marginalized and abandoned, rather than fully integrated in the ruling structure. No less important, the urban middle class grew more restless and critical. On March 4, 2012, after running an aggressive and populist campaign, Putin was elected in the first round with an impressive 64% of the vote. Many, however, did not trust the results and viewed them as falsified. To deliver on the second expectation from Medvedev's presidency by giving the middle class an important stake in the political system, Putin had to find a way to incorporate Medvedev's supporters in the ruling structure. Despite the opposition from the siloviks,[19] Putin moved to reform the state-party system by appointing Medvedev prime minister and supporting his appointment as the head of the UR.

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9

State-Led Capitalism

The norm of the international community and the modern world is a tough competition—for markets, investments, political, and economic influence. . . . Nobody is eager to help us. We have to fight for our place under the economic sun.

VLADIMIR PUTIN[1]

THIS CHAPTER ANALYZES the political economy dimension of Putin's system. Committed to a strong state model, Putin sought to create within the elite a group of those who shared his vision, limit power of those who did not, and exploit Russia's rich energy resources to generate capital for development. Despite the effort, the record of state-led capitalism is rather mixed in part because the state proved unable to overcome its regulatory weakness and conduct a policy of development.

The Nature of Russia's Capitalism

Russia has historically modernized from the above or through state efforts to reduce the development gap with Western countries. Soon after establishing the Muscovy princedom, Russian confronted threats from powerful, more technologically sophisticated European armies. Various rulers from Peter the Great to Nicholas II became preoccupied with reaching the level of development that would make it possible for the country to be secure in the face of potential external attacks. With the exception of the Soviet era, the dominant economic idea that inspired the Russian state was capitalism, but not the liberal Anglo-saxon kind with gradual development of the private sector and slow investment of capital into economic activity. Instead, as argued by Alexander Gerschenkron, Russia was a late developer and had no time to follow the institutional pattern of liberal capitalist states. France, Germany, and Japan faced similar predicaments. To survive as an independent power,

Russia had to overcome its backwardness and catch up with the developed world by building institutions that would allow it to redistribute wealth from consumption to investment and extract and allocate resources as the state required.[2] Russia's mobilization regimes channeled resources in the direction of rapid economic development by suppressing opposition from those unwilling to comply with such developmental imperatives.

This tradition of developmental thinking has informed Putin's perception of Russia's challenges. In his view, outlined in several key speeches, economic power and competitiveness play an extremely important role in the contemporary world. While military force remains critical for preserving state sovereignty, economic competitiveness has moved to the forefront of the struggle for survival in international relations. The key threats to Russia today are economic in nature and, to address them, the state must not fall behind in economic development. In one of his first speeches delivered in late 1999, Putin warned of the danger of Russia turning into a third-world country. In ridiculing overly noisy great power rhetoric he compared Russia to Portugal, the European Union's poorest member, and drew the discomfiting conclusion that "it would take us fifteen years and an eight percent annual growth of our GDP to reach the per capita GDP level of present-day Portugal."[3] At the time, the size of Russia's economy in terms of purchasing power was less than one-fourth that of the economies of China and Japan, and less than one-tenth that of the economies of the United States and the European Union.[4]

What must the state do to assist Russia in achieving rapid economic growth and protecting its sovereignty? According to Putin, it must preserve the ability to shape economic outcomes independently of market forces by controlling key resources, coordinating the activities of main internal players, and assisting the country in finding its niche in the global economy. In his Candidate of Sciences degree thesis in economics defended in 1997 Putin wrote, "A contemporary strategy for rational use of resources cannot be based exclusively on the possibilities of the market alone."[5] He was especially critical of the state's loss of control over natural resources, which he argued "resulted in stagnation of the national natural resource potential, destruction of branches of geology that had developed over many decades, and a series of other negative consequences."[6] His proposed solutions included the restoration of the state's regulatory capacity as well as development and subsequent support of national "financial-industrial groups-corporations" in competition with Western transnational corporations.[7]

Putin therefore rejected the market-based approach to economic development and embraced a vision in which the state is the dominant player.

In this distinctly neo-mercantilist vision, the principles of preserving state power and sovereignty were synthesized with those of liberal economics and social welfare. The state does not fundamentally undermine the principles of market economy and property rights, although in prioritizing development it preserves the right to interfere.[8] The state is also not hostile to the principles of social welfare in claiming to act on behalf of Russian citizens and taking upon itself the obligation to maintain "social stability."[9]

Russia's rejection of the liberal, market-based economic model has roots in both contemporary and historical developments. Its current neo-mercantilist vision has been in line with criticisms of the Western-centered liberal globalization as being responsible for the global economic crisis of 2008. Although the end of the Cold War produced expectations of increasing economic and political convergence across the world, nations increasingly reformulate Western liberal economic recommendations to better protect their societies and adjust to their particular environments.[10] Instead of increasing policy convergence to the Western liberal model, new cleavages and divergences emerged in the world, bringing new poverty, socio-economic divisions, and new areas of violence. Russia too went through devastating experiences with liberal economic reform during the 1990s. The failure of Western-style shock therapy reform put most of the population on the verge of poverty, which led to a much more pessimistic outlook that further complicated its engagement with Western globalization. In addition, Russia's skepticism of the liberal model is rooted in its demonstrated inability to support the country's great power status. Russia's economic model has more commonly emphasized state initiative and the redistribution of resources in the interests of preserving sovereignty, security, and world status. As a historical great power and a culturally distinct nation, Russia was never likely to change in accordance with the expectations of another (Western) civilization.

Liberalization and the "New Nobility"

In implementing its developmental projects, the Russian state has historically confronted two dilemmas. The first one was the elites' unwillingness to share their wealth. Ever since the emergence of the merchant class, the rulers have faced the problem of how to preserve their political dominance without discouraging merchants' commercial ambitions and turning them into enemies. The other dilemma was the predatory practices among members of the ruling class. Motivated by individual interests, state representatives frequently wanted to increase their personal wealth and power, rather

than merely serve the state. As Max Weber once noted, for politicians not to live "off" politics or not to make politics a permanent source of income, they "must be wealthy."[11] Corruption exists in all societies, but in poor ones it is especially pervasive.

In attempting to address these two problems, the state not only relied on force and coercion toward those it found undermining state goals but also sought to create a special class of state-minded capitalists. All Russia's modernization projects were carried out by what scholars have labeled "service nobility"—a special class of entrepreneurs with intense loyalty to the state and its leader.[12] To create such a class, the state established a system of privileges and promoted a code of honor reflected in a specially devised patriotic ideology. In exchange for generous privileges, the state expected hard work and full compliance with its modernization vision. All members of the service nobility were to be motivated by a common sense of purpose and prosperity. The state assumed that even in a competitive market environment, those assisted from above would end up on the winning side thereby strengthening the initial developmental objectives.

In attempting to overcome the power of the oligarchs of the Yelstin era, Putin too abstained from revising the existing rules in the economy and indeed went farther than his predecessor in creating incentives for economic competition. Putin's neo-liberalism was found not only in his public refusal to revisit the rigged privatization schemes left from the 1990s but also in not spending foreign exchange reserves on social programs and establishing a stabilization fund, maintaining a regime of trade openness, and practicing fiscal discipline. In particular, he introduced a new taxation regime. On the advice of Andrei Illarionov, the Kremlin set a new flat income tax of 13% for employees and small businesses effective the beginning of 2001. By ruling out proposals for progressive taxation, the state sought to stabilize the government budget and signal to business the desire to put government–business relations on new footing in support of private entrepreneurship. Overall, the listed measures helped to take advantage of rising energy prices and show a strong economic performance.

In addition, the state sought to empower a group of entrepreneurs with ties to Putin and encouraged their economic ambitions by providing them with special privileges. Several years after Putin's arrival to power a new class of property owners appeared with their wealth acquired due to special ties with the president and his inner circle. These new property owners were frequently members of Russia's political class. As opposed to the liberal ideal of separating politics and economics, the Russian norm maintained a fusion between

economic and political power on the basis of undivided loyalty to the ruler. Those with a background in security services appeared as the new service nobility in part because they shared a considerable part of Putin's own worldview and in part because they were in position to undermine the oligarchs. In December 2000, Nikolai Patrushev, the new director of the Federal Security Service and one of Putin's confidants, described the Federal Security Service's personnel as "our new nobility" by pointing to its commonly shared sense of service to the state.[13] By 2008, siloviks occupied, by some calculations, 67% of national leadership positions as opposed to 33% under Yelstin and 5% under Gorbachev.[14] Lacking both ideological and administrative capacity to create an entirely new class of entrepreneurs, Putin had to rely on already existing groups. By bringing siloviks to power, he broke the influence of oligarchs in politics, but he did not solve the dilemma of corruption in his own court. Many within his entourage continued to view the state in predatory terms and thus continued to abuse the privileges that the ruler granted them.

The De-Oligarchization[15]

As a result of the economic reforms of the 1990s, the most prominent interest group in Russia was a handful of extremely wealthy individuals—oligarchs—who emerged to control much of the economy and influence key decisions of the state. Despite their prior inexperience in the Soviet oil industry, several of them built their fortune in energy companies due to their access to financial capital from private banks, special connections to the Russian government, special privileges granted to them by Boris Yeltsin's state (tax breaks, etc.), and rigged privatization schemes.[16] The new economic actors, such as Mikhail Khodorkovski of Yukos and Boris Berezovski and Roman Abramovich of Sibneft, were not self-made individuals like the American robber barons; they became the owners of Russia's oil giants mainly because of state patronage.

As Russia's economic situation began to improve, Putin showed determination to renationalize key assets that had been transferred to the oligarchs during the 1990s. During 1999–2006, the economy finally caught up to the level of 1990 (Russia's basic economic indicators are summarized in Table 9.1) and continued to grow at an annual pace of about 6.5%. The overall size of the economy increased about five times in current dollars—from $200 billion to $1 trillion. Russia's per-capita gross domestic product (GDP) quadrupled to nearly $7,000, and about 20 million people were lifted out of poverty.[17] Commercially, Russia, too, was in a relatively advantageous position, as its foreign trade had been enjoying a structural surplus. Among economic

Table 9.1 Russia's Basic Economic Indicators, 1999–2007 (%, Annual Change)

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Real GDP growth	−5.3	6.3	10.0	5.1	4.3	7.7	7.2	6.4	6.7	7.3
Real wages	−10	−22	18	20	16	11	11	13	13	16
Budget surplus (% of GDP)	−5.3	0.5	3.5	3.0	1.4	1.7	4.5	8.1	8.5	5.5
Urals oil prices ($/barrel)	12	17	27	23	24	27	34	50	61	69

Source: Peter Rutland, "Putin's Economic Record: Is the Oil Boom Sustainable?," *Europe-Asia Studies* 60, no. 6 (2008): 1052.

sectors responsible for Russia's recovery were energy, retail, chemicals, metal, agriculture, and information technology. With rapidly increasing prices for oil and natural gas, energy emerged as a critically important tool for state-driven modernization.

Putin made known his lack of respect for the ways in which the oligarchs had emerged and enriched themselves, although he also expressed his readiness to honor the privatization and market reforms that had already taken place. While Josef Stalin took on the wealthy peasants (*kulaki*) by conducting de-kulakization, Putin sought to strip some of the oligarchs of their wealth in the context of the new market economy. In one of his private meetings with businessmen, Putin summed up his philosophy by telling businessmen that "they could keep what they had already stolen, but now they had to play clean, pay taxes, make investments and stay out of politics."[18] In his view, oligarchs and other interest groups had to have a subordinate place in the power structure.

It is in this context that the so-called Yukos affair must be assessed. The Kremlin was ruthless to those oligarchs that it perceived as violating Putin's "new deal"—that is, not staying out of politics and not cooperating with the state in the implementation of its economic vision. Boris Berezovski and Vladimir Gusinski, who launched an anti-Putin propaganda campaign using their media empires and their own TV channels, were charged with not paying their financial debts to the state and fled the country to avoid

prosecution. The state asserted its fiscal interests by launching a new tax reform and opening several prominent cases of tax evasion. "While the Yukos case was the best-known example, aggressive tax investigations were also conducted against Sibneft, Avtovaz, and other large corporations by which the state was able to gain more direct access to the wealth they generated."[19] Mikhail Khodorkovski was given time to leave the country, but chose not to and on October 25, 2003, was arrested on charges of multiple fraud and tax evasion. What further worsened his chances was the fact that he got involved in anti-Putin politics by generously supporting both the liberal and nationalist opposition to his rule. Indeed, he hinted that he was about to enter politics himself.[20] Oligarchs were again uniting their efforts to restore their power and run Russia both directly and through their representatives in parliament and the executive branch.

Another danger to the state came from the oligarchs' business decisions, including selling considerable parts of their assets to purchase property abroad, thereby increasing capital flight from the country. Some became frightened—like Gusinsky, who prepared to leave the country by selling a large portion of his stock in Russia's natural resources to buy a British soccer team.[21] Khorodkovski was not planning to emigrate, but he wanted to acquire greater security from possible state prosecution by selling a large portion of his oil empire to foreigners. In particular, he began negotiating with ExxonMobil and ChevronTexaco about selling a major share of Yukos to them, which would result in their ownership of 25% and 40% of shares, respectively. With major stakes of the company held by US oil giants, the contract would have possibly prevented the Kremlin's interference in Yukos.[22] Khodorkovski understood that "the most profitable business in Russia is politics and that's the way it will always be."[23] He was also about to merge with Sibneft to become the second-largest energy holder in the world after ExxonMobile and the fourth largest company in terms of production.

In part because Khodorkovski heavily lobbied American politicians and entrepreneurs, he received powerful backing from the United States. The US State Department called his arrest politically motivated, and many prominent experts, media outlets, and politicians from Senator John McCain to Senators Joseph R. Biden Jr. and Richard G. Lugar called on the Bush administration to get tough with Russia. In the early 2000s, Khodorkovski met with a number of distinguished members of America's political establishment—from Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham to former president George H. W. Bush—made generous contributions to various think tanks of both liberal and conservative

orientations, and established a close business relationship with the Carlyle Group, an investment bank that advised George H. W. Bush.[24] In July 2003 Khodorkovski met with US vice president Dick Cheney. The meeting and its contents were not publicized, but Yukos's negotiations with ExxonMobile and ChevronTexaco to sell a 65% share of the $8 billion company—some say at a considerably undervalued price[25]—took place following the meeting.[26] If in encouraging the deal the United States was seeking to gain leverage in Russia's energy policy, then the Yukos affair was politically motivated in the sense of preserving Russia's sovereignty, but not the meaning intended by many Western critics of Russia.

However, the Russian public that overwhelmingly felt robbed by Yeltsin's reforms strongly supported the Kremlin's actions against oligarchs despite their selective nature and questionable legality. In terms of policy formation, the anti-Yukos move meant the strengthening of state companies and the positioning of Rosneft as the oil company supported by the state. Several prominent commentators supported the new anti-oligarchical policies. Responding to the Western lack of sensitivity to the issue of social devastation, Stephen Cohen wrote,

> That ongoing human tragedy is what is mainly missing from the US media story, where poverty and the plight of most Russians are hardly ever mentioned. Even if some accounts of Russia's crisis are overstated, the only solution is a new economic course that uses the oligarchs' enormous profits from the country's natural resources to rescue and develop the rest of the nation.[27]

Padma Desai explained that in a country where notions of law and justice were severely undermined, there was hardly a legal solution to the problem of excessive wealth concentration and the restoration of a balance between state authority and big business.[28]

The subsequent developments showed that Putin's actions were moving Russia further in the direction of state-led capitalism. As the option of oligarchic capitalism was firmly rejected by Russians, the Kremlin acted consistently with public expectations.

Energy Expansion

With the objective of economic modernization in mind, Russia has developed a strategy of exploiting the country's abundant natural resources. In the world

of growing energy prices, the emphasis shifted from providing macroeconomic discipline and tough fiscal policies toward the desire to capitalize on Russia's reserves of natural gas and oil. The Foreign Ministry report entitled "A Review of the Russian Federation's Foreign Policy," commissioned by the Kremlin and released on March 27, 2007, embraced the notion of multipolarity based on "a more equitable distribution of resources for influence and economic growth,"[29] thereby laying the groundwork for a more self-confident and assertive Russia. Figure 9.1 shows the dynamics of world oil prices since the late 19th century.

Russia's energy strategy has included several important elements. Among them are increasing the state's share in energy companies, such as Gazprom and Rosneft, often at the expense of Western capital; building pipelines in all geographic directions; negotiating long-term contracts with energy consumers and obtaining access to their markets and distribution networks; raising energy prices for its oil- and gas-dependent neighbors; and moving to control transportation networks in the former USSR and coordinating its activities with other energy producers. Acting on these policy guidelines, the state did not renew production-sharing agreements with Western companies in the most lucrative oil fields in Siberia and the Far East. Foreign energy giants, such as Royal Dutch Shell and British Petroleum, now had to play by different rules introduced by the more assertive Russian state. In addition to the energy industry and military-industrial complex, the Kremlin announced plans to create "national champions" or state-supported companies in the banking, aerospace, automobile, and heavy machinery sectors. In the Caspian Sea, Russia sought to remain an important oil producer and preserve

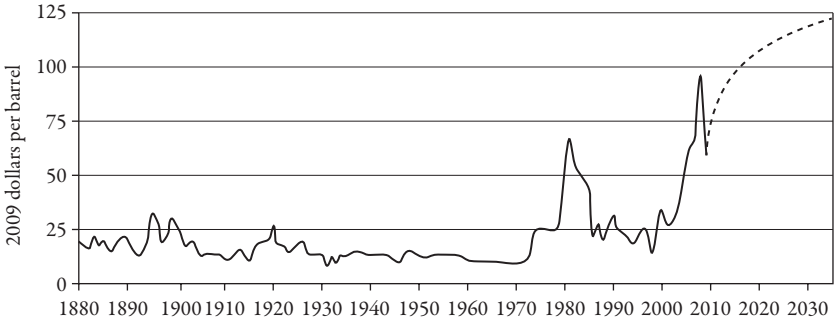

FIGURE 9.1 World Oil Prices, 1870–2009 (Actual) and 2010–2035 (US Energy Information Administration Forecasts)

Source: Clifford G. Gaddy and Barry W. Ickes, "Russia after the Global Financial Crisis," *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, 51, no. 3 (2010): 303.

its status as a major transit country through which to carry energy from the Caucasus and Central Asia to Europe.

Although it has generated anxiety in a number of energy-consuming countries in Europe and the United States, the strategy reflected more than anything else Moscow's desire to capitalize on its energy reserves and improve its chances to serve as a reliable oil and gas supplier primarily for Western countries. Against the advice of some energy analysts and geopolitical thinkers, the Kremlin did not think it would be better off sharply redirecting its oil and gas supplies toward Eurasian countries, such as China and India.[30] The Kremlin has argued that increasing state shares and creating large national companies was necessary to position them for successful international competition.[31]

Russian officials also continued to insist on expediting the country's entrance into the World Trade Organization. Russia completed negotiations regarding its membership in the World Trade Organization at the end of 2010. Russia further recognized the vital need for foreign investments and technology—particularly coming from Western nations—for continuing high economic growth. While president, Medvedev stressed the importance of investments to the information technology sector, whereas Putin has invited Western investments in the Russian energy sector. In 2011, Russia's state oil company Rosneft concluded an agreement with ExxonMobil to explore and develop Russia's Arctic Basin.[32] In 2012, Rosneft made a deal with BP, acquiring a 50% stake in the joint venture and giving BP a 20% stake in Rosneft, which observers called "the third-largest ever [deal] done in the history of the global oil industry."[33] The Kremlin also argued that attempts to control transportation networks and gain a greater presence in European markets could be beneficial to the Western countries to ensure the reliability of supplies and promote greater integration with the West. Finally, raising energy prices was necessary for commercial reasons, as a preparation for membership in the World Trade Organization.

Russia's energy should then be viewed as aimed at preserving state sovereignty and developing a comparative advantage in international competition. Although the Kremlin is not following the pattern of liberal capitalism, it is dependent on cooperation with Western companies. The discourse of the "anti-Western" Russia frequently masks an American desire to control sources of international energy supplies. As early as 1980, the United States declared its readiness to employ "any means necessary, including military force" to prevent other powers from blocking oil supplies from the Persian Gulf. Military bases and the Central Command were created to guard the oil flows. The same logic dominated US policymaking after the Cold War when

the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline was built to carry energy supplies from the Caspian Sea. It was accompanied by a militarization of ties with the governments of the Caucasus and Central Asia, and fierce competition with Russia for resources in the region.[34] In the late 1990s, Washington was also encouraging negotiations with the Taliban government to build a pipeline through Afghanistan, linking natural gas-rich Turkmenistan to Pakistan and bypassing Russia.[35]

Following 9/11, the Kremlin recognized the opportunity to develop relations with the United States and positioned Russia as a reliable alternative to traditional Middle Eastern sources of energy. Moscow has refused to comply with OPEC cartel demands that Russia, which is not a member of the organization, limit its rising oil exports. The US government initially demonstrated an interest in developing an energy partnership with Russia, and in May 2002, the two sides even signed a joint declaration on energy cooperation. However, by mid-2003, the two countries returned to competition over Caspian Sea energy. Supporters of energy cooperation lost to those in the United States who favored exclusive control over Caspian and Russian oil reserves. By some estimates, the Caspian region holds possible reserves of up to 233 billion barrels of oil, in comparison to Saudi Arabia's 261 billion barrels and the United States' 23 billion barrels.[36] During 2000–2005, major US companies such as ExxonMobil, Chevron, and Halliburton invested almost $30 billion in the area.[37] Steps taken by American policymakers after 2002 sought to undermine Russia's energy posture by taking the side of Ukraine and other nations in their energy disputes with Russia, trying to convince energy producers in the Caspian region—Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan—not to rely on Russian pipelines and instead to transport their oil through the BTC and other alternative pipelines under construction and by sabotaging Russia's plans to purchase shares in European companies and distribution networks. As a result of the United States–Russia rivalry, many opportunities were lost. Billions of dollars were spent on developing competitive pipelines, such as the Nabucco, the Trans-Caspian, or the Southern Corridor pipeline, but there was little effort to jointly exploit existing reserves and transportation routes. In the meantime, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan have built pipelines to China and may at some point consider cooperation with the Asian giant more advantageous to their interests.

Assessing Russia's Capitalism

Critics of Russia's capitalism have argued that it has been unable to deliver the results desired by Russian citizens. Such critics view Russia's system as

prone to stagnation and unable to develop in a competitive fashion. According to this perspective, the country's economy became excessively dependent on the development of the energy sector, which made the economy highly susceptible to external shocks and led to insufficient financing of sectors other than energy (i.e., a version of the "Dutch disease").[38] Rather than being invested in economic development, petrodollars serve to conserve and militarize the system. Such a system does not provide sufficient investment for development and is not nearly as dynamic as some other systems. Relative to Europe and the United States, Russia has low investment, human capital, and technological innovation. Politically, energy dependence translates into the emergence of a petrostate with the ruling elite functioning as a rentier class, resulting in endemic corruption and a widening "gulf between rich and poor."[39] By perpetuating a narrow-based authoritarian regime, state-led capitalism denies Russia a political future.

As important as these criticisms are, they tend to assess Russia's progress by the standards of advanced industrialized states. Given Russia's semi-peripheral status in the global economic system, it may be more appropriate to compare its performance across time and relative to those of energy-producing states. Such assessment leads to a more balanced conclusion than the one cited above. Although investments in Russia's nonenergy and technology sectors are indeed lacking, they are considerably higher than that of many other energy-producing states such as Saudi Arabia, Libya, or Turkmenistan. In terms of GDP share of manufacturing and services, tertiary school enrollment, and number of scientific articles and researchers, Russia is closer to northern European states than to oil producers.[40] The Russian government also allocated large funds for modernization of the military including in the areas of research and technology.[41] In addition, the state accumulated considerable financial reserves available for investment in development.

The picture is mixed on social programs and economic inequality. Russia's system heavily favors elites and the bureaucracy. As noted by Linda Cook, the regime produced a "distinctive mediation process that provided political access and compensation mainly for elite and statist welfare interests" with broader social constituencies largely "closed out."[42] Russia is also one of the most unequal economies with an extraordinary high number of billionaires, large capital flight, and a gap between rich and poor on par with that of the United States. This, however, has not translated into a shrinking middle class or a serious decline in living standards. By various measurements, the middle class grew considerably and constitutes about 25% of the population enjoying access to education, home ownership, Internet access, and greater consumption.[43] The government also keeps the social bargain by paying pensions and

salaries on time even though officials occasionally complain that salaries in Russia rise faster than the productivity rate.

Russia's ability to survive the global financial crisis served as another test of state capitalism. During 2008, Russia's economy was hit hard, revealing the tenuous nature of Russia's recovery. The economy, which is heavily dependent on energy exports, fell by around 9% in 2009, while China and India continued to grow, albeit at a slower pace. The government had to spend a considerable portion of its reserves to bail out domestic enterprises, including noncompetitive ones, and to scale down its activist foreign policy in Central Asia and the Caucasus. The crisis also revealed that large state-connected energy companies such as Gasprom and Rosneft have became heavily indebted to foreign companies. Their ambitions to increase market value were undermined, and they had to borrow again—this time for debt restructuring purposes. Despite all these financial setbacks, the government sought to keep its social commitments and address gaps in social infrastructure by reaching into its monetary reserves. Russia's politically dualistic power structure or the Putin–Medvedev tandem too survived the crisis albeit in a changed form (i.e., the two traded their offices). Overall, the regime's support is broader than during the 1990s due to Putin's incorporation of security elites in the political class.

The mixed record of state-led capitalism raises the question of the conditions under which it may be improved, rather than abandoned. The first condition concerns available revenue. Such revenue may come from relatively cheap labor—migrants, for example—or natural wealth in mineral resources. If the revenue is available, it may be exploited for development purposes. However, to exploit it successfully a second condition must be in place—good leadership. Such leadership must identify promising economic sectors for state investments and devise the system of responsibilities and rewards for elites and society.[44] Institutions for channeling state investments into profitable economic sectors must be established. Such institutions—financial, fiscal, and social—are essential to promote long-term development and to change Russia's insufficiently diversified economic structure from its energy focus to infrastructural, educational, and regional projects.

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10

The Managed Democracy

If by democracy one means the dissolution of the state, then we do not need such democracy.

VLADIMIR PUTIN[1]

Russian Views of Democracy

The Russian view of democracy is not fundamentally opposed to that of Western nations, yet it is distinct. As in the West, many Russians define democracy in terms of the protection of civil liberties and political freedoms.[2] However, Russians predominantly associate the success of democracy with a strong state. They do not think in terms of oppositions between "order" and "rights" but instead tend to favor their combination. As one pollster explained, "For many of my respondents, order was not the opposite of democracy or any practical concept of freedom. Rather, order—along with democracy—occupied a midpoint between autocracy on the one hand, and chaos, random violence, and social collapse on the other."[3] When asked whether it is possible for Russia to be both democratic and have a strong state, more than 50% believe that they can have both.[4]

Most Russians would agree that a strong state should provide three types of public services—unified rules, economic justice, and security. For instance, one poll taken in July 2012 revealed a strong preference for "equality of all citizens before the law" in realizing Russian political dreams about democracy; 77% supported such a view.[5] The second largest group of respondents (40%) prioritized egalitarian justice or a "small difference in income."[6] The same poll found that the political slogan that best expressed the dream of Russia's future was "social justice, equal rights for all, a strong state that takes care of its citizens," which was favored by 45%. Other popular slogans emphasized "human rights, democracy, free development of one's personality" (28%), "stability and development without revolutions and destabilization" (27%), and "Russia's return to the status of superpower" (27%).

Educated elites also tend to view Russian political development in the context of local realities by prioritizing order and justice. Although there is a pro-Western group within Russian liberalism, such thinking rarely commands strong popular support and is often challenged by liberals themselves. For example, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the so-called New Liberals, such as Pyetr Struve, Pavel Novgorodtsev, and Sergei Gessen, saw Russia as a strong, socially responsible state. This vision differed from the one defended by the Old Liberals of primarily constitutionalist orientation, such as Boris Chicherin and Pavel Milyukov. The New Liberals remained committed to a reformist agenda, but they insisted that the Russian state must actively help society during reforms and remain a sovereign power in international relations.[7] Contemporary Russian liberals also value recognition of power, sovereignty, and national diversity in the world.[8]

The belief in the importance of a strong state is likely to be behind the view that Russia needs its own unique type of democracy established on the basis of national traditions, which is different from European- or Soviet-style democracy (see Figure 10.1). From June 2005 to October 2011, such a view was shared by 45% to 50% of respondents and declined to below 40% only at the height of economic decline in response to the global financial crisis. On the other hand, those advocating Western-style democracy were in the 20% to 25% range, while those arguing for the Soviet type of system could muster support of about 15%.

Such an understanding of democracy as linked to the state has roots in Russia's premodern and contemporary history. While in the West checks and balances within the political system were established as a result of compromises between the rising merchant classes, kings, and feudal lords, in Russia the political structures were largely designed by the state responsible to its own people. The commercial classes were never sufficiently strong, and the people linked freedom to the prince's protection from abuses by nobles and local authorities. When not receiving the desired protections, peasants could rebel, but their anger was commonly directed at the nobles not the tsar, who was viewed as the ultimate protector. Members of the Russian intelligentsia, beginning with Nikolai Karamzin and Alexander Pushkin, also expected freedom and progress to come from the monarch, rather than society. In addition to a strong tsar, Russians valued economic justice as a precondition for their freedom. Such egalitarianism has roots in Christianity and the peasant commune. Finally, the Russian brand of freedom assumes the importance of external sovereignty and independence

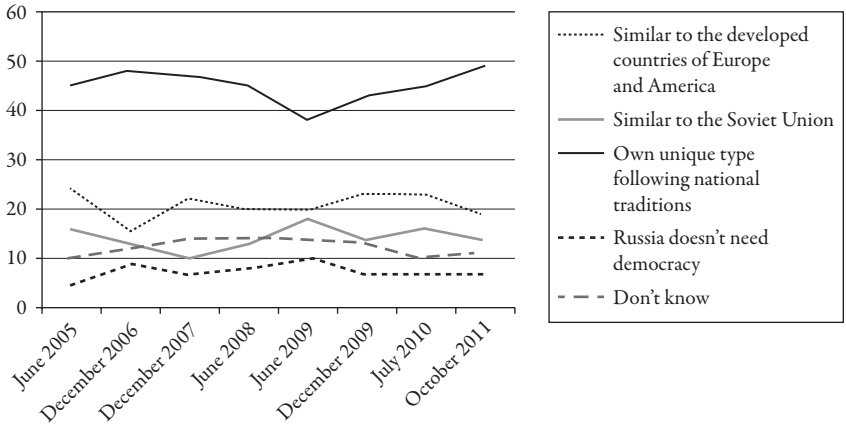

FIGURE 10.1 What Kind of Democracy Does Russia Need?
Source: *Russian Analytical Digest* 117 (September 19, 2012): 5.

from colonization. Russians formulated the narrative of independence centuries ago, as they successfully withstood external invasions from Napoleon to Hitler.

The more recent experience that shaped Russian views of democracy developed during the 1990s, which, to many people, represented regional separatism, poverty, and political disorder. Russia and other post-Soviet nations faced the daunting task of creating the prerequisites of a viable state, such as territorial unity and security, while transforming the economic and political systems. They confronted the challenge of a "triple transition": from an empire to a nation, from a command to a capitalist economy, and from a communist to a democratic system.[9] That many Russians do not view democracy as their first priority must be attributed not to their authoritarian nature but to the state's inability to provide order, security, and basic social services. State-building is a complex process that includes but is not limited to the development of pluralistic political institutions and free media. The transition to democracy is not likely to be successful if it does not take place in the context of an inclusive national identity, efficient economy, and political unity.[10]

The Kremlin's Fears and the Managed Democracy

The concept of "managed democracy" was introduced by experts with ties to the Kremlin in response to Vladimir Putin's prioritization of political stability and economic reforms in the first half of the 2000s. Although the head of

state was opposed to "any kind of special Russian democracy," he explained that "the principles of democracy should correspond with the current status of the development of Russia, with our history and our traditions."[11] By "current status," Putin meant the country's need to recover from the negative legacy of the 1990s. When pressed hard by journalists, he made it clear that for democracy to progress the state had to provide the necessary conditions, including peace and order, and that the urge for freedom had to comply with the imperatives of political stability. At one point, while responding to a journalist's question about Chechnya and human rights, Putin replied, "If by democracy one means the dissolution of the state, then we do not need such democracy." At another point, in response to George W. Bush's suggestion that Russia should follow Iraq by establishing a free press and freedom of religion, Putin, referring to Iraq's rising violence, commented, "We certainly would not want to have the same kind of democracy that they have in Iraq, quite honestly."[12]

Experts and journalists defined managed democracy as a semi-authoritarian regime tasked with conducting necessary structural reforms and identified its principal author as the former head of the presidential administration, Alexander Voloshin.[13] Such reforms should result in the establishment of conditions for free and fair competition, but the process of achieving such results must not be accompanied by disorder. As Graeme Robertson writes, such a hybrid regime deliberately seeks to "extract the benefits of competition while minimizing the likelihood of loss of control. Competition is less something that authoritarians have failed to eliminate, but rather something that they consciously allow and try to control."[14] Restrictions on competition are temporary and necessary to balance the need in stability. In Putin's own words, "Democracy is not anarchy or disorder, and it cannot mean that someone is able to take advantage of the people."[15]

Soon after Putin's reelection in March 2004, Russia was confronted with a series of new challenges. Georgia's peaceful change of power following the fraudulent parliamentary election in March 2003 was followed by other revolutions in Ukraine in November 2004 and Kyrgyzstan in March 2005. The most important one took place in Ukraine, when the Kremlin's favored candidate, Viktor Yanukovich, was defeated. In contrast to the internal threats to the country's stability posed by the legacy of the 1990s, the Kremlin now felt vulnerable to the perceived *external* threat. Because the United States proclaimed a global strategy of regime change and because the colored revolutions brought to power Russia-unfriendly leaders in the former Soviet region, the Kremlin feared that Washington also aimed at changing the regime in

Russia.[16] The United States' frequent criticism of Russia's political system and assistance to pro-Western organizations inside Russia only strengthened the perception of an external threat from the West.

The Kremlin saw the US policies as disrespectful to Russia's sovereignty and independence. In response, it sought to reaffirm Russia's commitments to European values and protect the country from potential interference from outside. In his programmatic speech delivered to the Federation Council in March 2005, Putin declared that he saw Russia moving toward the same values that are shared by others in the European continent—"the ideals of freedom, human rights, justice and democracy."[17] The president was clear, however, that while moving in the same direction of freedom and democracy with Europeans, Russia does so at its own pace and given its own conditions. In the same speech, referring to the Western role in the colored revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine, Putin insisted on Russia's right to "decide for itself the pace, terms and conditions of moving towards democracy," and he warned against attempts to destabilize the political system by "any unlawful methods of struggle."[18] In addition, the Kremlin wanted to protect itself by training its own youth organizations to defend what it saw as Russia's indigenous democracy, restricting activities of Western nongovernmental organizations and radical opposition inside the country and warning the United States against interference with Russia's domestic developments.[19]

In this context, Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration Vladislav Surkov proposed the concept of "sovereign democracy," which was meant to emphasize the need for Russia to protect its internally determined path of development.[20] The Kremlin's ideologists and theorists sympathetic to the official agenda justified the importance of protecting natural resources and determining the conditions on which Western companies were to participate in Russia's economic development. In a world of growing energy prices, the emphasis shifted from providing macroeconomic discipline and tough fiscal policies toward the desire to capitalize on Russia's reserves of natural gas and oil. In addition, Russia insisted that a more assertive foreign policy would better protect its economic interests and national security.[21] Putin's supporters argued that the insistence on sovereignty and security was consistent with European values. From their perspective, upholding the values of sovereignty in Russia was in fact preserving the European values that Europe itself could not always sustain when confronted with political pressures from the United States.[22] The push for noninterference in Russia's domestic developments by outsiders became stronger over time, and in his subsequent addresses to the

Federation Council in May 2006, April 2007, and December 2012, Putin put an even greater emphasis on the values of sovereignty and a strong national defense.[23]

Managed Democracy in Perspective

The managed democracy regime assisted Russia by limiting the power of oligarchs in the regions and the center and consolidating support for a generally progressive agenda after the 1990s. Putin and his handpicked successor, Medvedev, were popular, reflecting genuine popular approval of the new policy. New state priorities were exactly those favored by Russians at the time and included political stability, economic recovery, and international peace. Even the fear of the colored revolutions resonated with their belief in the importance of stability. Multiple polls demonstrated that society was well aware of the considerable financial and political costs of embarking on imperial projects. Most respondents loathed the 1990s yet had no illusions about restoring the Soviet system. In a typical poll, about 60% expressed nostalgia about the system, yet only about 12% considered its restoration realistic, and 31% were against such a restoration.[24] Russians also valued political order and stability as a result of a successful foreign policy by expressing strong condemnation of revolutionary prospects in the country. One poll revealed, for instance, that Russians are most positive about such word-symbols as "order" (58%), "justice" (49%), and "stability" (38%). In the same poll, the word "revolution" was among the least popular, with 22% viewing it in a negative light.[25]

In a broader historical perspective, the managed democracy regime is reminiscent of periods of Russia's recovery under limited political pluralism. For instance, Russian policies in the 1890s (led by Finance Minister Sergei Witte)—internal economic development through state-driven liberalization, building extensive transportation networks, and commercial expansion in Asia and the West—were accompanied by autocracy and a moderate foreign policy. Witte and his supporters worked hard to prevent any involvement in confrontations with major powers by concentrating on domestic changes. The Bolsheviks' New Economic Policy was developed out of a similar understanding of the need to revive local economic initiatives while abstaining from foreign policy adventures. The "peaceful coexistence" with capitalism was supposed to assist the Soviet state in recovering from the legacy of devastating post-revolutionary years. In both cases, introducing democracy was viewed as something that would have undermined the state's ability to mobilize resources and conduct reforms. Neither the late tsarist era nor the

New Economic Policy was overly politically restrictive. As with managed democracy, they were far from being well-consolidated authoritarian regimes and meant to create space for political participation gradually, in line with achievements of greater economic and political stability.

Despite its initially progressive nature, managed democracy could not function effectively because it rested predominantly on the popularity of a single leader. A considerable proportion of the state bureaucracy was not competent to steer the transition from chaos to freedom by minimizing abuses of power. The challenge was to strengthen the institutions of executive power while preserving and gradually expanding the space for political contestation. However, creating space for freedom from above and intimidating political opponents is not the same thing. Not infrequently state officials followed orders from higher authorities to deliver "stability" by engaging in the intimidation of the opposition and the falsification of elections, the latter technique being borrowed from the 1990s.[26] The overreliance on such techniques undermined the promise of the new political institutions. The old informal politics of oligarchs was merely replaced by the informal politics of state-dominant organizations with little attention given to the development of institutions.

There were multiple examples of the managed democracy working to undermine its own effectiveness. In March 2008, then-president Putin designated the liberally minded Medvedev as his political successor, but in March 2012—out of fear of internal instability—Putin returned to power. No viable institution of power succession was created, and the mechanism of selecting a preferred leader remains informal. Another example concerns the Kremlin's attempt to develop institutions of civil society from above and limit external interferences in Russian politics by establishing the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation, initiating changes in the legislature on the framework of regulations for nongovernmental organizations, and providing grants to Russian nongovernmental organizations through a competitive process.[27] However, in the process of encouraging the indigenous development of Russian civil society, the Kremlin empowered primitive anti-Western and anti-liberal feelings and undermined a number of legitimate foreign organizations working in the country. Managed democracy's record with media was also contradictory. By establishing control over the majority of television channels, the state took the power of mass media away from business interests and restored its ability to shape the public discourse. Alternative news coverage remained available; the Internet, newspapers, and some radio and television channels were also free of state control. Nevertheless, state-controlled media frequently

silenced important events and opposition voices, while displaying a lack of intelligent coverage and analysis.

The overall progress of Russia with democracy-building was therefore limited. The country had come a long way from communism while preserving some important attributes of state governance, and the general trajectory has been rather positive. Lacking conditions critical for a functioning democracy, such as a strong middle class and political order, the country nevertheless created the necessary macroeconomic environment and abstained from attempts to restore the old regime. By the mid-2000s, Russia revived its economy and a good measure of political viability. Although many observers criticized what they saw as nondemocratic practices in application to Russia and other countries in the former Soviet region, Russia's power transitions were orderly and resulted from popular elections. In a country with still weak political institutions and the lack of elite consensus on some important issues, the elections did not cause significant social disruption, and the results of the vote generally corresponded with public hopes. However, the techniques of the managed democracy came at important costs to the country's political development. The disqualification of viable candidates from participating in the elections, the co-option and intimidation of political opponents, and other forms of reliance on administrative power as practiced by the state did not merely narrow the space for competition but blocked future democratic developments in the country. Russia made progress relative to some of the former Soviet states and its own past but not relative to the potential of its own development.

To strengthen Russian democracy, the state should not only preserve the conditions for stable economic and political development in the country, but also—in an attempt to eliminate potential abuses of power—establish clear formal boundaries between the state and society.

Public Perceptions of Russia's Political System

Russians' perceptions of their political system are rational in the sense that they are consistent with the understanding of social priorities by citizens. The majority of Russians is aware that the system is not democratic, yet provisionally accepts it as the price for economic and political stability and expects a movement toward democracy in the future.

Although many Russians would like to see both democracy and order established, they clearly prioritize the latter over the former. Multiple polls demonstrate this point. During 2000–2010, over 70% of respondents

registered their preference for order with only around 15% preferred support for democracy.[28] Most Russians associate "order" with political and economic stability. In 2010, most Russians prioritized addressing inflation (56%), alcoholism (53%), unemployment (46%), and corruption (44%), with only 8% expressing concern over state of democracy and human rights.[29] In 2011, poverty and inflation were at the top of their list of concerns—81% and 59% of those polled, respectively—with only 3% describing the restriction of civil rights and democratic freedoms as an acute problem in the country.[30] In another poll taken in 2011, 80% of respondents said the government must take care of its citizens, as most of them cannot survive without such care.[31] In 2012, in answering the question "What in your opinion, is more important for Russia right now, economic growth or democracy?," 52% prioritized economic growth and only 3% democracy.[32]

Polls also show that the majority of Russians do not view their political system as a successful democracy. One study conducted by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and the Russian Academy of Sciences, which analyzed twenty years of changes in Russian attitudes, revealed that in 2011 only 2% believed that Russia is definitely a democracy, 26% thought that it may be a democracy, and 50% said it is not.[33] Forty-seven percent said twenty years of economic and social reforms only benefited the elite in the past decade, similar to the 50% who felt the same about the 1990s. Another 71% believed that citizens had no say in state matters.[34] The Pew Global Attitude Project surveyed Russian political views in May 2012 and found that only 31% of the respondents are satisfied with the way that democracy is working in their country. Although those with a favorable view of Putin are somewhat more upbeat about the state of democracy in Russia (36% satisfied), even within this group a majority (57%) see room for improvement.[35]

Despite this level of pessimism in describing their political system, the plurality of Russians expect positive changes in the direction of democracy in the future. The above-quoted study by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and the Russian Academy of Sciences found that about 60% believe that Russia is developing in a direction that will eventually bring positive results, while 40% think it is moving toward a dead end.[36] In February 2012, 35% of Russians believed that democratic processes are developing in the country, although about one-fifth were worried about signs of anarchy and dictatorship. After the presidential elections in March 2012, about 32% said that there was "more possibility for change now than I had thought possible until recently," as opposed to about 26% who disagreed with the statement.[37]

Overall, Russia's political system can hardly be described as either a democracy or an established authoritarian regime. Those assessments that present the country's system as authoritarian[38] are frequently based on potentially misleading comparisons of Russia to Western countries.[39] Rather than engaging in primarily cross-national comparisons, scholars would do well to place Russia within its own historical context. Although the new conventional wisdom after Putin's return to the presidency seems to be that Russia as a nation has failed to pass the test of democratization, reality may prove supporters of this view wrong yet again.

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II

The Normal Great Power

Above all else Russia was, is and will, of course, be a major European power.

VLADIMIR PUTIN[1]

THE CENTRAL DILEMMA of Russia's foreign policy is how to gain recognition by the Western world without losing Russia's own political and cultural distinctiveness. Here lies the inherent contradiction or paradox: Russia needs the West, yet it can't really join it. Western institutions are arranged differently from those of a strong state. Western economic and political interests in the world also do not coincide with those of a Russia that seeks to remain a great power. Putin has tried to address this problem by formulating the concept of Russia as a normal great power. In his calculus, Russia and the West are to become partners on the basis of some shared interests and security threats rather than core values.

Russia's International Predicaments

The Russians perceive their identity as historically tied to Europe and the West, and the Russian state wants to be accepted as a part of the Western world. It was Europe that created the larger meaningful environment in which Russia's rulers defended their core values. Europe and the West in general have played the role of the external significant Other and figured prominently in Russia's debates about national identity. Russian Westernizers argued that Western Europe could serve as a role model, whereas the Slavophiles wanted Russia itself to become the leader of European civilization. Their disagreement notwithstanding, both schools assumed Europe and the West to be the meaningful environment in which Russia's rulers had to defend their values and interests.[2] Russia has historically sought to be recognized by the Western Other and to modernize in a like manner. Although Europe's recognition of Russia as one of its own was never unproblematic,[3]

all Russia's leaders from Peter the Great to Vladimir Putin identified with European ideas.

The strength of identification with Western civilization explains why Russia has historically sought to achieve its objectives in cooperation with Western, especially European, nations. As a Christian power, Russians preserved their sense of cultural affiliation with the West throughout the long years of Mongol domination, which at the time reinforced the sense of threat from culturally alien or non-Christian people of the South. Russia worked to develop ties with Europe and fought multiple wars alongside of the West. The list of such wars includes—most prominently—the First Northern War against Sweden (1655–1660), the Seven Years War against Prussia (1756–1763), the war against Napoleonic France, the First and Second World Wars, and, more recently, the global war on terrorism.

However, Russia's cultural lenses are also different from those of Western nations, and such lenses are formed by a locally distinct historical memory, local institutions, ties with historic allies, and contemporary challenges. Never colonized by the Western nations, Russia greatly values its political and spiritual independence. Such independence has kept alive Russia's ambitions to preserve its influence in Eurasia and Eastern Europe. For example, Russia has had traditionally strong ties with Slavic and Orthodox allies and could only develop its ties with European nations when their actions were not disruptive to these historical ties. In addition, as a continental empire with vast borders, Russia has been wary of multiple and varied challenges to its security. By contrast, the Western states, especially those protected by the oceans from potential invasions, have historically had fewer security challenges.

These distinct memories, institutions, and foreign ties serve as the foundations of national pride, and as a nation with a long historical experience, Russia is often offended when "young" nations, such as the United States, "lecture" Moscow about democracy, human rights, or good behavior in international politics. Today, both established and rising powers face relatively few external threats to their security. Russia, however, remains preoccupied with the security of its borders and natural resources and acts as a concerned power. Much of this preoccupation has roots in Russia's history of geographic vulnerability and tradition of resistance to real and perceived threats from abroad. Western countries therefore have difficulty understanding Russia and accepting it as their own.

In turn, Russian society has difficulty trusting the West. Russian attitudes to the Western world have historically been divided. One school of international thinking has argued for the "natural" affinity of their country with

the West based on shared values. The early Westernizers were not liberal and instead sought to present Russia as a loyal member in the family of European monarchies. A different group of Westernizers identified with the West of constitutional freedoms and political equality. After the era of Great Reforms and Russia shifting its relations from Germany to France and Britain under Alexander II, the czarist government seemed more willing to embrace the new European values of constitutionalism. Even Westernizers within the Soviet system saw Russia as not standing too far apart from Europe by placing the emphasis on social-democratic ideas. For instance, one of Gorbachev's favorite lines of thinking was that the Soviet Union had to "purify" itself of Stalinist "distortions" and become a democratic or "human," version of socialism (*gumannyi sotsializm*). After the Soviet disintegration, Andrei Kozyrev and Boris Yeltsin assumed that Russia would develop liberal democratic institutions and build a market economy after the manner of the West by championing the vision of "integration" and "strategic partnership with the West." Westernizers have been opposed by those protective of Russia's political and cultural independence. This group has sought to rebuild Russia's historical identity by emphasizing the notion of great power (*derzhava*) and distinctive values, such as religion, a strong state, and a collectivist economy. The two groups represent opposite poles of Russia's identity construction, and offer radically different perspectives of Russia's past. While Westernizers have a tendency to be nihilistic toward Russian national history, the supporters of independence are prone to an exaggerated sense of pride in and even glorification of the Russian past.

Each Russian statesperson therefore had to simultaneously deal with the dual challenges of the skeptical West and internal identity contestation. To be successful, the Russian state has had to propose a vision both acceptable to the Western nations and culturally sustainable at home.

Engaging the West

Putin responded to this dual challenge by articulating the vision of Russia as a "normal great power."[4] He believes that his country is a "normal" European nation that relinquished communist ideology and "imperial ambitions."[5] Yet he also claims, "Russia can only survive and develop within the existing borders if it stays as a great power."[6] For Putin, great power status is not a goal in itself; rather its role is to create the necessary conditions for Russia's more advanced engagement with the world. The term "normal" signals support for Westernizers, whereas the concept "great power" reconnects culturally with the historical perspective of an independent state.

Domestically, the vision resonated with Westernizers supportive of Russia's ties with Western countries. Many members of the business community and liberal parties threw their support behind Putin's vision.[7] With the Westernizers he came out critical of past practices of overextending foreign policy resources—a possible reference to both the Soviet and Yevgeni Primakov periods. Primakov's diplomacy included attempts to reintegrate the former Soviet republics under the Kremlin's leadership and establish a Russia–China–India axis in world politics to contain the United States. Unlike Primakov, who tended to view the world primarily in terms of new threats to Russia's security, Putin pointedly identified both threats and opportunities. In particular, he was keen on emphasizing the economic nature of the contemporary world and the need for Russia to be successful in its geoeconomic rather than military struggle. For him, the most important national interest lay in Russia's modernization and economic growth, not balancing American influence in the world. In the president's own words, "The norm of the international community and the modern world is a tough competition—for markets, investments, political, and economic influence. . . . Nobody is eager to help us. We have to fight for our place under the economic sun."[8] As far as security threats to the modern system of international relations were concerned, Putin saw them coming from terrorist activities rather than state-organized military capabilities.

After September 11, 2001, Putin was among the first to call President George W. Bush to express his support and pledge important resources to help the United States in its fight against terrorism. Russia's measures of support included intelligence sharing, opening Russian airspace to relief missions, taking part in search-and-rescue operations, rallying central Asian countries to the American cause, and arming anti-Taliban forces inside Afghanistan. Putin's successor Medvedev continued the counterterrorist cooperation with the United States. Russia has provided airspace and overland transportation and authorized joint counter-narcotics operations in Afghanistan. In March 2012, the Kremlin has also approved NATO's use of an airport in Ulyanovsk as a transit point for moving soldiers and cargo to and from Afghanistan.[9]

Putin also cooperated with the United States on nuclear security issues. In 2003, he made little of his opposition to the US desire to abandon the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty by calling it a "mistake" that nevertheless presented no threat to Russia's security. The treaty had prohibited the unilateral building of a nuclear missile defense system, but the United States' administration made it clear that it would be withdrawing from the treaty regardless of the reaction from Russia. Although Putin's position on the US missile

system later changed, he had no objections against Medvedev's nuclear rapprochement with President Barack Obama within the "reset" framework. In April 2010, the two sides signed the new START agreement, which replaced the old treaty of 1991. The agreement further limited the number of strategic nuclear missiles to the level of 1,500, renewed a verification mechanism, and banned the deployment of strategic weapons outside the national territories.

In addition to counterterrorism and nuclear security issues, Putin was eager to improve economic relations with Western countries. In the early years, Putin emphasized Russia as a reliable alternative to the traditional Middle Eastern sources of oil and natural gas. He was also interested in attracting American investments in the Russian economy and approved a number of prominent energy deals with companies such as ExxonMobil and Chevron to develop Russia's Arctic Basin. Under Medvedev's presidency, Russia stressed the importance of American investments in nonenergy sectors, particularly the information technology sector. Russia also strengthened ties with European partners, especially Germany, France, and Italy. The European Union accounted for some 50% of Russia's foreign trade relative to a mere 5% of trade with the United States. In its relations with European countries, Russia's main focus was greater integration with the European Union's economy, and it has concluded a number of important agreements to this effect. Russia's largest natural gas company Gasprom, built a direct pipeline to Germany beneath the Baltic Sea. It also negotiated an agreement with Hungary to extend Russia's Blue Stream pipeline from Turkey to Hungary via Bulgaria and Romania. Another important development was a new projected oil pipeline to Bulgaria and Greece beneath the Black Sea, bypassing the crowded Bosphorus. Russia also managed to achieve greater integration with European economies by exchanging some companies' shares.

Putin's European priorities became clear in his emphasis on multilateral decision-making in global politics. In partial reflection of Russia's European priorities, the Kremlin did not support the United States' military intervention in Iraq but joined the France- and Germany-led coalition of those opposing the unilateral US war. In his speech delivered at the Munich Conference on Security Policy on February 10, 2007, Putin stressed the importance of multilateral cooperation with the West, yet expressed strong criticism of US "unilateralism."[10] Acting on the vision of a normal great power, Medvedev articulated a broad perspective on Europe "from Vancouver to Vladivostok" and proposed a new all-European treaty to establish a new security architecture by moving beyond NATO expansion and the conflict over Kosovo. He cited the need to strengthen international law after the August 2008 military

conflict with Georgia and urged to move beyond Atlanticism by developing an equal partnership between the European Union, the United States, and Russia.

Putin's policies outside the West were shaped by the same belief in the importance of economic modernization and the preservation of state sovereignty. Even while developing strong ties with China and other Asian nations, he was mindful of the significance of relations with the West. Russia was especially determined to win markets in arms and energy, not develop strategic diplomatic alliances or deep cultural affinities in Asia. Through the Asia-Pacific, Russia wanted to strengthen its presence in the global economy. Jointly with Western nations, the Kremlin also wanted to address important security challenges in the Korean peninsula, the Middle East, and the Caucasus. One important concern was the development of its Siberian and Far Eastern territories. Putin issued an explicit warning in one of his early speeches, "I do not want to dramatize the situation, but if we do not make every real effort, then even the indigenous Russian population will soon speak mostly Japanese, Chinese, and Korean."[11] In the former Soviet region, Putin sought to be pragmatic and centered on developing mutually advantageous economic and political relations. In October 2011, he proposed the development of a new Eurasian Union among the Commonwealth of Independent States. He emphasized the open nature of the proposed union and laid out economic incentives for joining it, including an increase in trade, common modernization projects, and improved standards of living.[12]

Preserving Great Power Status

Despite Putin's willingness to cooperate with the West on various political and economic issues, he was not a pro-Western liberal. He saw economic improvement as a way to confirm Russia's great power status and to preserve the required space to maneuver to defend Russia's political interests in world politics. Given that Putin did not want to antagonize the West and that he was aware that the West needs Russia as an ally, he planned to promote its global interests as he saw necessary.

The emphasis on great-powerness appealed to various members of Russia's sizable military and security establishment who shared Putin's beliefs in strengthening the state and social order. Overall, the supporters of Russia's great-powerness wanted the country to strengthen its economic and political influence in Europe, Asia, and Eurasia. If anything, they were concerned with

the "normal" or Western component of his foreign policy vision. Some of them were worried that Putin's post-9/11 rapprochement with the United States was too risky and may lead to a loss of geopolitical influence in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Others pointed to the possibility of worsening relations with the Muslim and Asian regions. Others, however, were comfortable with the new vision. Like Putin, they wanted to cooperate with the West where it was possible, while recovering Russia's own economic and military capabilities. By the mid-2000s, the country indeed recovered economically and continued to grow at the annual pace of about 7% (Russia's growth rate is summarized in Table 11.1). In July 2006 Minister of Defense Sergei Ivanov even proclaimed publicly, "Russia has now completely recovered the status of a great power that bears global responsibility for the situation on the planet and the future of human civilization."[13] His article sought to justify the need for greater military expenditures and more assertive policies on the international scene.

By that time, several developments strengthened the appeal of great-powerness and assertiveness in foreign policy in Russia. The country's new economic strength provided its leadership with additional resources to address growing political and security vulnerabilities. In the Kremlin's perception, Washington's strategy of global regime change was fundamentally destabilizing and translated into three principal dangers. First, Moscow was fearful of a revolution within Russia. Although public support for a revolution was weak,[14] the Kremlin's political technologists took the threat seriously, knowing that less than 1% of the population was really involved in the recent centered colored revolutions, which were concentrated in capital cities and that influential elites in the United States maintained contacts with supporters of the regime change in Russia.[15] Second, the Kremlin felt increasingly encircled by pro-American regimes in the former Soviet region. The so-called colored revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan during 2003–2005 failed to bring greater stability and prosperity but greatly politicized the international

Table 11.1 Russia's Gross Domestic Product Growth, 1999–2007 (%, 1990 = 100%)

1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
60	70	72	75	80	85	90	96	102

Source: L. M. Grigoryev and M. P. Salikhov, "Virazhy perekhodnogo perioda," *Rossiya v global'noi politike* 6 (November–December 2006), http://www.globalaffairs.ru/numbers/23/6691.html.

environment in the region. Georgia and Ukraine had already expressed their desire to join NATO, which added to Russia's sense of strategic insecurity. Third, Russia felt vulnerable to the radicalization of Islam in response to the US methods of fighting a war on terror. Although some of Russia's problems of Islamic terrorism could be attributed to its own errors, such as attempts by some of its authorities to close local mosques, the other aspects were related to US policies that tended to isolate moderate Muslims and give the cards to radicals. In a global world, this translated into a greater support for Islamic radicals inside Russia.

As a result, a new foreign policy consensus emerged that an assertive style of achieving the objectives of development, stability, and security suited Russia best at the moment. In addition to Putin's critique of US unilateralism in Munich, a new Foreign Ministry report, "A Review of the Russian Federation's Foreign Policy," released on March 27, 2007, presented Russia as ready to actively shape international relations by challenging the actions of others, particularly the United States, if they were "unilateral" and disrespectful of international law.[16]

Russia's assertiveness manifested itself in several areas. In response to the United States' global policy of regime change, the Kremlin established a number of politically loyal youth movements and tightened restrictions on the activities of Western-funded nongovernmental organizations inside the country. In response to Washington's decision to deploy elements of a missile defense system in Europe, Putin announced his decision to declare a Russian moratorium on implementing the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty, which would allow Russia to freely move its conventional forces within its territory. At the NATO summit in Bucharest in April 2008, Russia managed to block the issuance of Membership Action Plans to Georgia and Ukraine and further expressed a strong criticism of the OSCE/NATO-based security system in Europe, arguing that again new "lines of division" were forming between nations with a common history. The Kremlin further sought to strengthen its energy position in world markets by building pipelines in all geographic directions, purchasing shares abroad, raising energy prices for its oil- and gas-dependent neighbors, moving to control transportation networks in the former USSR, and coordinating its activities with other energy producers. Although the EU perceived Russia's energy strategy and disputes with former Soviet republics as a threat to its own interests, the Kremlin pressed ahead by insisting on the legitimacy of its approach. Finally, despite the United States' protests, the Kremlin also sought to promote arms sales in the Middle East, China, and Latin America.[17]

Overall, the assertive great-powerness was not meant to undermine Putin's vision but served as its continuation in a changed context. Russia and the United States were not moving toward another Cold War. There was no ideological line dividing the two nations: they agreed on some issues, while sharply disagreeing on others. The Kremlin did not call for any concerted effort to undermine the West's global position. Instead, it defended the principles of collective leadership and multilateral diplomacy in international relations. Russia's assertiveness expressed by Putin's Munich speech indicated frustration with the lack of progress in developing ties with the West, not with the principle of normalization as a foreign policy objective. Increased toughness on the global policies of the United States and the European Union, as indicated by the Kremlin's numerous public statements, meant to draw attention to critical, neglected challenges of the post–Cold War world, such as terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, poverty, and political instability. It also meant to convey Russia's desire to be more integrated with the Western economy. The policy course stayed focused on strengthening economic relations with the world, especially Europe, not building exclusive alliances with China, India, or the Commonwealth of Independent States.

The Balance Sheet

Subsequent developments further demonstrated that Putin remained interested in developing cooperation with the Western nations. In 2008, in part in response to the growing prominence of siloviks in domestic politics, Putin designated Dmitri Medvedev—not known for his ties with members of the security class—as his successor. With Putin's support, Medvedev decisively defeated his rivals, winning the overwhelming majority of the popular vote in the first round of voting. The United States and European governments expressed cautious support for Medvedev, who soon initiated a new effort to engage the West in projects of mutual importance.

Around the fall of 2009, Russia's foreign policy began to depart from the assertive course that had culminated in the war with Georgia in August 2008. In response to the global financial crisis and the United States' attempts to "reset" relations with Russia, the Kremlin revived an emphasis on cooperation. Under Dmitry Medvedev's presidency, the country adopted a more nuanced approach to the outside world—one that was dictated by a need to modernize the domestic economy. The new approach stressed the importance for the country to build "modernization alliances" across the world, especially with those nations that could offer investments and technologies

for economic development. Having reestablished itself as a major power, Russia was now turning to domestic modernization and inviting the outside world to contribute to it. In the context of the West's decline relative to rising powers in Asia and Latin America, the Kremlin sought to establish stronger relations outside the West, yet remained keenly interested in developing economic, technological, and political ties with the Western nations. Russia also completed negotiations over its membership in the World Trade Organization—the end of a road that began in 1993. It improved relations with the United States in the areas of nuclear security and Afghanistan. The Kremlin also proposed a new framework for European security, proposed new projects to facilitate Russia–European economic integration, and sought to develop a common understanding on solving the Middle Eastern conflict and the issue of Iran's nuclear program.

The "reset" diplomacy opened a new way of engaging Russia, thereby recognizing the country's importance in the world and empowering those favoring cooperation with the West within it. The approach alleviated the Kremlin's fear of NATO expansion and the region's destabilization in response to Washington's strategy of global regime change and made it possible to address important security issues in Afghanistan and the Middle East.

Still, from the perspective of many in Russia the "reset" did not amount to the recognition of the Kremlin's objectives. Cooperation in Afghanistan did not produce a joint strategy of isolating the Taliban and strengthening Karzai's government. A number of important issues between Russia and NATO remained unresolved. The Kremlin was increasingly critical of the US proposal to develop a missile defense system jointly with the Europeans but separately from Russia. The Western nations remained rhetorically supportive of the former Soviet states' bid for NATO membership, whereas Russia maintained its right to protect its interests in Georgia and elsewhere in the former Soviet region. At the end of 2010, Moscow shelved its initiative to negotiate a new security treaty with European nations after not getting any support from NATO officials and the United States. Economically, Russia and the West continued to disagree over what defines economic security. The Kremlin also criticized the West's handling of the Middle Eastern crisis by going after regime changes in Libya and Syria. Even Russian Westernizers such as Dmitry Trenin noted, "Beyond Afghanistan, and to some extent Iran, the United States sees Russia as a low-value partner. . . . It is basically ignoring Russia, whose presence and influence there are considered negligible."[18] The assessment by Russian statists was even harsher.[19]

Overall, the picture was mixed and consisted of a conditional cooperation on the part of Russia and a limited recognition of the Kremlin's efforts by the West. The problem was that the two sides did not have an overarching strategic vision that they could share. As Thomas Graham, a former senior director for Russia in the George W. Bush White House, wrote, the "reset" had no answer to "what the two countries should aspire to now so as to foreclose a return to dangerous geopolitical rivalry and hold open the promise of mutually advantageous strategic partnership."[20] The vision of a normal great power therefore remained a work in progress.

Recommended Sources

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For Russia's historical relations with the West, see Iver B. Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe* (London: Routledge, 1996); Robert Legvold, ed., *Russian Foreign Policy in the Twenty-First Century and the Shadow of the Past*, ed. Robert Legvold (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); and Andrei P. Tsygankov, *Russia and the West from Alexander to Putin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

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The Crisis

12

Protest

Opposition . . . uses every opportunity to seize power by pushing aside the existing government, making accusations, and pointing its errors. Generally speaking, this is absolutely normal. . . . However, it is wrong, [and] unacceptable to be led by others into some schemes to destabilize the society.

VLADIMIR PUTIN[1]

PUTIN'S SYSTEM BEGAN to unravel in 2008 and entered a period of crisis in December 2011. Crisis or the inability of a system to function in the established mode may be revealed in multiple dimensions. Indicators of instability include economic slowdown, political protests, interethnic tensions, elite infighting, corruption scandals, and stagnating relations with the outside world. Such developments do not come as isolated events but instead tend to accumulate and push in the same direction of the system's change. Russia's economy slowed in response to the global financial crisis of 2008 and never returned to the pre-crisis level of 5% growth. In 2013, the economy reported the growth of only 1.3%.[2] Relations with Western countries entered a period of increasing tensions soon after the Orange Revolution in Ukraine. In addition, the country was rocked by rising social protests, which culminated after the flawed Duma elections in November 2011, growing ethno-nationalism, and multiple corruption scandals. Whether the crisis will be resolved in reformist or revolutionary fashion depends on structural conditions as well as the state's ability to manage their consequences.

The Tradition of Social Protest in Russia

Social protest is not new to Russia and has played an important role in the history of the strong state system. Many Russians have defined freedom as dependent on a just and protective state, and they have historically rebelled

against what they saw as the state's inability to perform its duties. Abuses by authorities prompted peasants to leave their regions or organize resistance. Rebellions by Ivan Bolotnikov, Stepan Razin, and Yemelyan Pugachev are examples of powerful and long-lasting attempts at such resistance in Moscow and St. Petersburg. Bolshevik attempts to impose collectivization of peasant farms also generated powerful protests from below.

The more educated classes were frequently dissatisfied with the freedoms and privileges granted to them by the strong state as well. Following Andrei Kurbski's example, members of the nobility challenged the tsar to relax his grip on power by incorporating their participation in governing the system. In particular, Kurbski insisted on turning the boyars' Duma from an advisory into a law-making institution. With other nobles pushing in a similar direction, tsar–nobility relations were rarely harmonious. Another class advocating change was the intelligentsia, a special social group that appeared in Russia in the first half of the 19th century. Under the influence of the French Revolution, members of the Russian intelligentsia grew critical of the autocratic tradition and produced a variety of arguments in favor of social reforms. Following the lead of people like Alexander I's advisor Mikhail Speranski and the Decembrists, the young officers who challenged Alexander's rule in 1825, the Russian liberal intelligentsia advocated for constitutionalism and the abolition of serfdom in the country. Other members of the intelligentsia embraced radical socialist thinking and terrorist methods for fighting the tsarist autocracy. Liberals and radical socialists were opposed by romantic and pragmatic defenders of the strong state system, from the Slavophiles to court nationalists.

Those opposing the strong state system were rarely united. More commonly, they were divided between those encouraging change from above and those supporting a mass mobilization against the state. Whether a protest movement acquires more radical forms is determined by the country's structural conditions, such as the presence of security threats and socio-economic polarization. For example, if the country's war experience was having a devastating impact on the economy, the likelihood of social protest increased, especially if the population did not perceive the war as just. Another structural condition of protest is the technological transformation of the economy accompanied by the rise of new social classes with growing social expectations. Thus the low and middle classes played critically important roles in the transformations of tsarist and communist Russia, respectively. No less significant for understanding social protest is the role of the state. The regime's ability to accommodate some of the

protesters' demands and to reform the system may serve as the ultimate predictor of its future.

Under Putin's system protest played a significant role yet was carefully managed by the regime. The managed democracy system allowed and even encouraged some elements of political competition while discouraging others. Although social protest movements contributed to the power change from Gorbachev to Yeltsin and remained significant throughout the 1990s, they were weakened during the first Putin term.[3] In the first half of the 2000s, protests subsided largely in response to rapidly improving living conditions and political stabilization. The state took advantage of these conditions and claimed credit for success. However, after Putin's reelection in 2004, protests emerged as increasingly important. Russians were frequently engaged in various protest activities including strike, highways blockades, and street demonstrations in response to the perceived worsening of economic conditions and abuses of power.

Most of these protest activities did not challenge the strong state system. The protesters' demands were rather specific and included the payment of pensions and social benefits, preservation of the environment, and the observance of road rules by cars owned by government officials. In many such cases, the state's response was flexible. In early 2005, many Russians mobilized to defend their system of benefits inherited from the past. Such benefits for people in certain categories concerned public transportation, medicine, housing, and utilities. The Putin government proposed to replace the benefits with cash payments, but protests turned out to be overwhelming, affecting eighty-five regions.[4] The government was caught by surprise, and Putin offered concessions and blamed the protests on the reform's local implementation. An example of environmental protest was a struggle waged by Muscovites for a forest preservation in the suburb of Khimki during 2007–2010. The government planned to build a new highway through the forest. Initially supported by Medvedev, the activists eventually lost the fight, but got substantial concessions from the government.[5] Another example of local activism were protests against government officials' cars equipped with blue lights, which allowed them to ignore road laws by bypassing slowly moving vehicles. In response to public demonstrations, in May 2012 President Putin ordered to sharply reduce the number of cars for which blue lights would be allowed.[6]

In the cases where the regime viewed popular protests as threatening, it responded by coopting some protesters, selectively arresting others, and creating pro-Kremlin organizations and movements. Fearful of revolution, the regime acted to reduce its perceived threat by all available means.[7] However,

by the end of 2011 the protest movement maturated significantly, while the old system of managing protests revealed its problems.

The New Protesters and Their Demands

The new wave of protests in Russia emerged following the flawed elections of the Duma on December 4, 2011. The official results declared the ruling United Russia (UR) party the winner with 49% of the vote, but the results were widely contested across the country. The protest was a city-based phenomenon with the largest demonstrations taking place in Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Yekaterinburg in December 2011, February 2012, and May 2012, following Putin's election as president. The country had not seen such demonstrations since the years of Perestroika. The protests expressed the feelings of a considerable part of the population and had the potential to push for the system's change. According to sociologists, at the time some 25% to 30% of the population sympathized with the protesters and thought that they were effective in achieving some of their goals. In particular, Russians felt that the protests helped to "wake Russian society up," initiate a dialogue with the authorities, force the reintroduction of direct elections for regional governors, and make the presidential elections cleaner.[8]

However, the protesters were hardly united and represented diverse social and political groups.[9] One group included members of the cultural elite such as Boris Akunin, Dmitri Bykov, and Kseniya Sobchak. They shared liberal and pro-Western views but mainly wanted to increase the moral and civic awareness of the Russians. Another group included bloggers and civil rights activists such as Alexei Navalny and Evgenia Chirikova, who wanted to expose the regime's failures to confront corruption and other abuses of power by the authorities. The third group was made up of members of the old opposition to the Kremlin, who were once in government but had for various reasons broken with it. In particular, Boris Nemtsov, Mikhail Kasyanov, and Vladimir Ryzhkov wanted a liberal makeover of the overall political system. In addition, there were also new Russian nationalists, who, like Vladimir Tor and Konstantin Krylov, advocated for tighter controls on immigration from Central Asia and the Caucasus. Furthermore, there were young leftists and communists united around Sergei Udaltsov and Eduard Limonov. Finally, there were those with background in business or government economic ministries who, like former finance minister Alexei Kudrin and oligarch Mikhail Prokhorov, advocated economic liberalization and gradual change.

Although all the protesters shared the call for "honest elections," they diverged in their overall objectives and supported different means of achieving them. Some adopted radical methods for achieving moderate goals. For example, a candidate for the position of mayor in the southern city of Astrakhan, Oleg Shein, competed against a UR member and lost by the official count. In protest against the official count, Shein went on a forty-day hunger strike, which ended only after the Central Election Commission found that the law was violated in 129 of 203 polling stations.[10] In ending his strike on April 22, 2012, he stated that his protest achieved its aims, which included exposing election fraud. He did not call for new elections or the system's transformation.

Others, like the blogger Alexei Navalny, embraced moderate and peaceful methods for achieving radical change. His struggle with corruption led him to articulate slogans such as "Putin is a thief," "Get the thief out of the Kremlin," and "Russia without Putin." In particular, he advocated arrests and lustrations for all members of the ruling elite and the entire UR establishment.[11] A number of liberal and nationalist members of the protest shared the objective of regime change and rallied behind Navalny by endorsing him as a future president of Russia. If he was banned from running for office, he planned to use mass demonstrations as a form of public pressure on the authorities.

Finally, there were those who defended radical goals with radical methods. For instance, three members of the punk band Pussy Riot entered Moscow's main Orthodox Cathedral of Chirst the Savior to stage a performance, dancing near the altar and calling on the Mother of God to "chase Putin away." According to the three women participants, they wanted to challenge the Orthodox Church leaders for supporting Putin's election as president.

Although the new protest movement was unexpected, it had roots in the previous years and experiences of mobilization against the authorities. First, the new middle class appeared to challenge the system. Having disappeared after the shock therapy in the 1990s, the middle class now constituted some 25% of the population.[12] Members of the new middle class did not feel particularly grateful to Putin for the years of economic prosperity and were increasingly dissatisfied with what had been presented by the Kremlin as accomplishments: political stability, economic recovery, the end of Chechen war, and the revival of Russia's international status. Second, Russian civil society did not suddenly awake in December 2011 but was developing in the 1990s and under the managed democracy system as well. During the years of controlled competition, the activism of civil society continued to grow, albeit in a

constrained fashion. For example, in early 2008, despite the Kremlin's efforts to control the activities of nongovernmental organizations, 655,400 of them were registered as functioning.[13] Finally, Russia's ruling elites changed during the years of the Medvedev–Putin tandem and could not function as before. A considerable liberalization of the regime occurred between 2008 and the fall of 2011,[14] and many members of the elite did not support the return of Putin to power. While not supporting a revolution, they advocated the change of a system that proved unable to deliver greater openness, the rule of law, and a renewed economic confidence. Although the majority of Russians remained skeptical of the protesters, the new movement reflected broad social aspirations and was not about to disappear from the political scene.

The State Response

In responding to the protests, the state acted within the parameters of managed democracy by exercising a mixture of firmness and caution. The Kremlin refrained from using force and relied on other methods to preserve control, including promises of reform, the cooptation and discrediting of opponents, and the mobilization of supporters. By adopting these methods, the regime sought to engage moderate protesters and isolate radicals.

Immediately following the first wave of demonstrations, the regime acknowledged some of the protesters' demands and promised investigations of cases of falsification through the courts. In his press conference on December 9, 2011, Putin proposed to equip all polling stations with TV cameras to minimize fraud. He also promised to liberalize elections by introducing lower thresholds for political parties and to consider reviving the election of regional governors. He created distance from the widely criticized UR by leading a new political movement, the All-People's Front, and inviting popular individuals from across the political spectrum to act as his campaign representatives. He further explained his vision in a series of published articles. In response to anti-Kremlin demonstrations, the Kremlin organized pro-Putin rallies. Outside the public eye, Putin also maintained contacts with moderate members of the protests, such as Kudrin and Prokhorov. While other liberal parties were disqualified from participating in presidential elections, Prokhorov took part, obtaining an impressive 8% of the vote.

The Kremlin's treatment of those deemed radical intended to show a firm hand. In his public statements, Putin ridiculed the protesters and accused them of acting in concert with foreign powers. He said that the protesters received hundreds of millions of dollars in "foreign money" and that the US

secretary of state Hillary Clinton personally spurred the protesters to action by refusing to recognize the elections as free and fair. "The first thing that the secretary of state did was say that they were not honest and not fair, but she had not even yet received the material from the observers . . . She set the tone for some actors in our country and gave them a signal," Putin argued. "They heard the signal and with the support of the U.S. State Department began active work."[15] During the election campaign, the state sought to undermine leaders of the protest by exposing their public conversations, conducting searches of their apartments, and launching criminal investigations into their activities.

These mixed steps proved effective. By February 2012 Putin revived his public ratings, and in March he was elected president with more than 60% of the vote. The protesters failed to achieve their moderate demands, such as new elections to the Duma, the resignation of key officials including the Head of the Central Election Commission, and direct negotiations with Putin. Over time, the protesters' popularity declined with fewer people interested in participating in their actions.

After Putin's inauguration as president, the state continued to act by reorganizing the political space and engaging in repressions against leaders of the new opposition. In attempting to discredit the regime's most radical opponents, the Kremlin launched a series of actions. Some protest leaders were arrested. Members of the punk bank Pussy Riot were charged with hooliganism and sentenced to two years in prison. A member of the socialist Left Front, Konstantin Lebedev, also received a two-tier sentence, while the Front's leader, Sergei Udaltsov, was investigated for "plotting mass unrest" and faced up to ten years in prison. The charismatic blogger Alexei Navalny was tried on corruption charges and sentenced to five years in prison.[16] By doing so, the Kremlin sought to isolate its critics. In its perception, it hardly risked its reputation, for protesters could no longer boast strong popular support. For example, as many as 44% of Russians found the trial over Pussy Riot's members "fair and unbiased," while only 17% said they did not believe the hearing was fair.[17]

The Kremlin also submitted to the State Duma several laws restricting the activities of nongovernmental organizations, especially those partially funded from outside the country. These laws required the nongovernmental organizations to submit to exhaustive audits and accept the humiliating registration as foreign agents.[18] Several prominent Western organizations, such as the US Agency for International Development, were accused of meddling in Russia's internal affairs and had to stop their activities in the

country. Other laws required state officials and members of parliament to renounce their foreign assets—a move presented by the Kremlin as "nationalization of the elite," as a preventative measure against the country's potential destabilization/change of regime. In December 2012, the Duma also passed the "Anti-Magnitsky Act," which targeted US citizens whom Russia considers to be violators of human rights and banned the adoption of Russian children by US citizens. The law was passed in retaliation for the US Congress passing the Magnitsky Act, which denied visas to Russian officials presumed responsible for human rights violations and froze their assets. The new laws passed or considered also included those against "homosexual propaganda" and "offending religious feelings." In the context of conservative political culture, these steps were likely to benefit the state.

The repressions against some of the protesters and nongovernmental organizations were accompanied by the regime's hardening and centralization. Hard-line factions within the Kremlin wanted Putin to purge the ruling class of more liberal groups associated with Prime Minister Medvedev. The hardliners viewed such purges as necessary for the regime's nationalization by presenting the Kremlin's "liberals"—Vice Premier Arkadiy Dvorkovich and Head of the Government Administration Vladislav Surkov, among others—as maintaining relations with the dangerous protesters. Medvedev and Dvorkovich were frequently attacked in the media, and Surkov had to resign from his job in May 2013.[19]

In addition to attempts to isolate "radicals," the Kremlin sought to reorder the political space by changing the format of existing organizations, recruiting more supporters, establishing a dialogue with moderates, and isolating radicals. The actions reflected a desire to preserve the initiative, while recognizing the emergence of a more complex social structure in society. Putin continued to distance himself from the UR by increasingly associating himself with the All-People's Front. In June 2013, he spoke at the new movement's inaugural congress in Moscow and formally agreed to serve as its leader. While speaking at the congress, Putin presented the new movement as an umbrella organization where "people of opposite views could gather to discuss problems" and unite "efforts in searching for the most appropriate development options."[20] By the fall of 2013, the Kremlin gained a new confidence by locating what experts identified as Putin's conservative majority.[21] By studying Russian reactions to the Anti-Magnitsky Act, the trial over Pussy Riot, and restrictions on activities of the protesters and nongovernmental organizations, Putin's regime concluded that it had a sufficiently strong social base not to allow any destabilization. The new majority included those supportive of traditional family

values and a strong role for the state at home and in the international arena. Besides claiming leadership and initiative, the Kremlin wanted to further open the political system for those willing to work within it. In particular, the presidential administration indicated its readiness to further integrate into the system some representatives of the nationalist and liberal spectrums. The former were to be associated with Dmitri Rogozin, who was once purged from politics by Surkov but had since earned the loyalty of the Kremlin and had become a member of government. Rogozin's former movement, *Rodina*, was now fully restored as a legitimate political organization.[22] This group was to compete for votes not only with the UR but also with established conservative parties such as the Communist Party and the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia. As far as liberals were concerned, they were to be associated with Kudrin and Prokhorov, who were yet to take advantage of the Kremlin's benevolence and build a political organization. Opportunities for such development existed given that some 25% to 30% of the population registered their support for moderate protesters but had no representation in the State Duma.

The Kremlin's methods of opening the political system to selected loyalists included simplifying the registration of political parties, restoring single-ballot elections to fill 50% of the seats in parliament, and reviving the elections of local governors.[23] That those measures were not meant for all became clear when several nonsystemic liberal and nationalist parties were banned from participating in local elections in the fall of 2013.[24] At the same time, the regime allowed prominent members of nonsystemic opposition to compete and even win in local elections. In September 2013, Navalny was released from custody—officially until his sentence takes effect—and ran for mayor in Moscow. By official count, he received 27% of the vote, leaving behind all candidates except the incumbent mayor Sergei Sobyanin. The latter received 51%, barely making it in the first round. An even more impressive performance was shown by Yevgeni Rozman, who became mayor of the largest city in Ural region, Ekaterinburg. Another opposition candidate, Boris Nemtsov, was elected to local Duma in the Yaroslav oblast. The regime's shift from banning opposition candidates from participating in elections to attempting to incorporate them into the existing system of managed democracy was attributed to Vyacheslav Volodin, who replaced Vladislav Surkov as the new deputy head of the presidential administration.[25] Continuing to act on the newly gained confidence, in November 2013 Putin met with leaders of the nonparliamentary opposition for the first time to discuss their concerns. In December of the same year, he pardoned twenty thousand prisoners, including members of the Pussy Riot and his critic, former tycoon Mikhail Khodorkovsky. Many of those charged

for disturbances during protests in early 2012 were either released or received sentences lighter than those expected. Such selective openness of the system within the parameters of managed democracy could lead to more competition, paving the way for a future two-party system. Such a system would reflect the already existing divisions within the political class between conservatives and liberally minded advocates of reform. However, it is no less likely that the familiar one-and-a-half party system will simply reinvent itself with the governing role moving from the UR to the All-People's Front.[26] For example, the revolutionary change of power in the neighboring Ukraine may serve as a catalyst for the Kremlin to strengthen the managed democracy regime rather than dismantle it.[27] In such a case, the allocated room for systemic opposition will remain the same with more parties competing to fill that space.

The Weakness of Institutions

The possibility of reinventing managed democracy in response to the protest movement raises the question of the system's institutional effectiveness or ability to accommodate rising social and political demands in Russia. Is the Kremlin's mixed reaction with elements of coercion and cooptation likely to have a stabilizing effect on the country under Putin's leadership?

Two interrelated problems may emerge and be exacerbated under the described dominant party system. First, the new leaders approved by the Kremlin may prove unable to play their designated role, either out of the overly constraining political framework or some leadership flaws. If Navalny and others are not willing to play by the new system's rules, the political system will stagnate rather than develop with the systemic parties crowding each other within the space allocated by the state and not taking roots in civil society. Under such a scenario, a political crisis and a future political protest, possibly more radical than before, will not be prevented. Second, the Kremlin's efforts to control the radical opposition through repressions and intimidation may have the side effect of undermining some groups within the systemic opposition. For example, state investigations prompted some witnesses, such as liberally minded economist Sergei M. Guriev, to flee the country out of fear of prosecution on false charges. His decision sent the signal to other systemic liberals that they too might be unsafe in the new political environment.[28] Such developments may not only contribute to the system's stagnation but also encourage its regression toward single-party rule.

The larger question is whether the system of managed democracy has a built-in tendency to become a personalistic rule unable to address Russia's

institutional problems. Western scholars of Russia's political system have documented the leadership's reliance on informal norms, deals, and networks rather than formal institutions in governing the country. They have argued that such a leadership style silences the voices of important segments of the population and deepens divisions within the ruling circles. Such divisions became more visible during the protest following the November 2011 Duma elections. The increasingly dissatisfied middle class was not the only source of protest. Some members of the elite supportive of Medvedev's bid for the second presidency felt frustrated with Putin's system and his decision to return to the Kremlin. As a way of preventing political crises, many scholars have recommended the abandonment of attempts to "manage" politics in favor of building democratic institutions. This would include guarantees of full rights for the opposition and the establishment of competitive elections.[29]

However, by themselves, such steps are not likely to guarantee smooth and successful political development and may encourage a revolutionary rather than reformist or state-controlled transition. Gorbachev's Perestroika during 1987–1991 or the provisionary government following February 1917 serve as reminders of such a possibility. Broad democratic changes are likely to be viewed by the Kremlin as potentially destabilizing and untimely. The state will not move in the direction of democratization if the leadership does not feel secure. To address the problem of an institutional vacuum, the state may increase the space for the opposition by relaxing restrictions for nongovernmental organizations and political parties' registrations. This is all the more important given that opposition candidates outside Moscow are likely to become more active and populist by challenging existing political boundaries. In addition, the state must strengthen its own governing institutions by moving away from the identified personalistic tendencies. The ultimate test of Putin's system may be its ability to not only institutionalize a greater political openness but also establish formal rules for reforming elites and transferring power. Only a state that is both accountable and administratively strong will be capable of addressing Russia's formidable problems, while preventing prolonged instability with unpredictable consequences for the country and its leadership.

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13

Ethno-Nationalism

For centuries, Russia developed as a multi-ethnic nation (from the very beginning), a state-civilisation bonded by the Russian people, Russian language, and Russian culture native for all of us, uniting us and preventing us from dissolving in this diverse world.

VLADIMIR PUTIN[1]

INTER-ETHNIC TENSIONS THAT became pronounced in Russia by the mid-2000s were another contributor to the crisis of Putin's system. They originated from a rapidly increased influx of non-Slavic migrants into the successfully growing economy and the lack of state policies to manage ethnic diversity in a country with twenty-five million Muslims. In response, the state articulated the idea of Russia as a state-civilization that combines ethnic and nonethnic principles of nation-building. Russia as nation-state remains a work in progress, as various ethnic and civic ideas compete in the discoursive space by shaping perceptions of the public and the state. Although the chapter reviews these ideas consecutively, it must be stressed that all of them remain significant contributors to formation of Russia's national identity.

A Vacuum of Values

Every nation is founded on certain ideas or myths that help to manage internal diversity and preserve national unity. In a systematized form, such myths constitute an ideology of relationships between the core and minority groups on the one hand and between the unified national self and the outside world on the other. Management of diversity is an essential problem of nation-building, and every ideology seeks to preserve national unity by creating common values—typically by proposing socially compelling interpretations of historic events—and disseminating these values across the socially

defined national space. To be successful, such dissemination must overcome resistance from groups defending more particularistic values.

Most important, every nation must find a way to accommodate diverse ethnic groups each with their own cultural, linguistic, religious, and historical characteristics. Ethnic values and prejudices are central to people's socialization and are difficult to change. Building loyalty to a nation and national political system is therefore a slow, gradual process during which joint memories and institutions must be developed to give rise to a new form of human attachment.[2] So powerful are ethnic values that even while serving as the core institution of modern societies, the nation does not fully break with its original ethnic roots but instead builds upon its way of relating to those outside the home group.[3]

Russia has traditionally solved the national unity/ethnic diversity problem by introducing a transnational idea or an idea with cross-ethnic and cross-cultural appeal. Initially, such was the Eastern Christian idea that provided various Slavic tribes with concepts of social unity and justice. Although tensions between the Russians and other nationalities were a part of the empire's existence, these tensions were not as pronounced as in other, overseas empires.[4] At a later stage of the Russian empire's existence, Russians had to learn to coexist with Islam and supported those Muslim authorities that were willing to submit to the empire's general directions.[5] Under the Soviet system, the state sought to further integrate Muslim communities by introducing secular communist ideology as a new transnational idea. Even members of some of the most independent Islamic nationalities, such as the Chechens, generally accepted the new system. Despite Stalin's mass deportation of Chechens to Central Asia in 1944, most of them did not collaborate with Hitler during the Second World War and fought bravely on the Soviet side. Many Chechen intellectuals also fully shared the vision of diverse nationalities' coexistence within the framework of a single Soviet state and supported Gorbachev's idea of democratic reform.[6]

However, the collapse of the Soviet state ended the appeal of the communist transnational idea and created a vacuum of values. Since the 1991 dissolution, Russians have lacked a national idea of unity and justice as well as the state capacity to enforce unified rules across the nation. At home, multiple inter-ethnic riots have taken place, and ethnic Russians have developed strong resentments toward immigrants from Central Asia, the Caucasus, and China.[7] Abroad—in part due to the lacking moral vision—Russia is frequently perceived as a corrupt power with a ruling elite preoccupied with political survival and personal enrichment, rather than the advancement of

national ideals. In the meantime, as the state has failed to articulate a new national idea, many Russians have gravitated to traditional Christian ideals, with the number of self-identified religious believers in Russia having grown threefold since the early 1990s.[8]

A Civic Nation

Russia's first attempt to address the vacuum of values had to do with the notion of a civic or "non-imperial" nation. The new leadership believed that during the Soviet era Russia suffered politically and culturally, and it should now rebuild its identity. Valeri Tishkov, the director of the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology and the minister for nationalities in 1992, provided the intellectual justification and first put forward the concept of a civic nation publicly in 1989. The central thrust of viewing Russia as a civic nation was its de-ethnification or the removal of the categories of ethnicity and religion from the identity-building project. Tishkov argued that Russia should form a civic Russian (*rossiyskaya*) nation or a community of all citizens of the Russian Federation regardless of their cultural and religious differences, rather any form of ethnic Russian (*russkaya*) nation. Internally, the new vision categorized Russia within its current post-Soviet borders as a political nation and "co-citizenship."[9]

Until 1993, the government attempted to act on the civic identity vision. Tishkov argued for an understanding of nationality as citizenship, for abolishing the principle of ethnic autonomies, and for giving the priority to individual rather than collective rights. In November 1991, the government confirmed its commitment to the civic identity project by adopting the citizenship law. The law recognized all those living on the territory of the Russian Federation as citizens, regardless of their ethnic characteristics, and called a citizen of the Russian Federation *rossiyanin* (defined in civic terms), not *russki* (ethnic Russian). The government also planned to issue new nonethnic passports to all citizens of Russia and redivide the country's regions along nonethnic principles.

Externally, the civic nation vision meant to relieve the new Russia of responsibility for Soviet policies and their historical legacies in the region. In particular, Russia was not to be responsible for the well-being of twenty-five million ethnic Russians—about 30% of the homeland Russians—who resided in the former Soviet republics outside Russia. Acting on this vision, the government denied any responsibility for ethnic Russians outside of territorial Russia. Although Yeltsin had made some statements about the need to

defend "our compatriots abroad," Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev argued until the autumn of 1992 that ethnic Russians outside Russia did not constitute a special problem for the Russian government.

The civic nation project could not be successful and soon found formidable opposition from several distinct sources. Ethnic autonomies resisted the civic nation project out of fear of losing their own identities. Ethnic Russian nationalists established conservative organizations, such as the Congress of Russian Communities, to speak on behalf of Russians outside Russia and to favor an imperial reunification with their homeland.[10] There were also many supporters of preserving strong cultural ties across the former Soviet region and establishing a transnational community in the region. The government attempted to resist the growing opposition to its policies but without much effect. Yeltsin and Kozyrev saw their agenda being coopted by nationalists and conservative members of the political class.

Therefore the civic identity project failed on ethnic and transnational accounts. The new leadership planned to have ethnic autonomies dissolved and their memories disappear. By prioritizing the principle of individualism, the leadership also neglected the need for a transnational idea to engage common cultural and historical roots of peoples residing in Russia and the former Soviet region. Unlike Gorbachev, who had offered his country a culturally distinct perspective and an opportunity to reformulate its sense of national pride, the new Russian leaders were not imaginative in their vision of national identity. They gave little consideration to the country's distinct past experience and, by denying the role of ethnic and transnational advocates, denied Russia the very legitimacy of a new search for its post-Soviet identity.

The Russian Nation

Ethnic Russian nationalism became the main alternative to the vision of civic nationhood. It drew on the nation's pre-Soviet experience and began to challenge the official vision already in the 1990s. By the middle of the decade, the Kremlin departed from its initial stance by incorporating elements of Russian nationalism into it. Russia advanced the idea of integrating the former Soviet area by capitalizing on strong ties with the Russian diaspora. The concept of integration was influenced by those who promoted the primacy of the Russian language and Orthodox religion in the region. The Congress of Russian Communities, for example, insisted on Russia's responsibility for ethnic Russians abroad—a view later adopted by Yelstin himself. However, rather than directly supporting Russians abroad, the government

began to promote the idea of dual citizenship in the former Soviet states. The idea was not successful and by 1995 was rejected by all the post-Soviet states, with the exception of Turkmenistan and Tajikistan.

The government's way of responding to Russian nationalism was, of course, selective and instrumental. The Kremlin wanted to revive the social, economic, and political coherence of the former Soviet region, without reviving the empire. The new foreign minister Yevgeni Primakov felt that Russia had an obligation to respond to the political and cultural feelings of the twenty-five million Russians who found themselves outside their "homeland" yet continued to identify with it. As early as in his 1994 Foreign Intelligence Report, Primakov directly linked the fate of the Russians in the former USSR to the survival and prosperity of Russia. In addition to ethnic Russians, there were many who grew up to speak Russian as either their native or the preferred language. After failure of the dual citizenship idea, the government tried to respond to the feelings of ethnic Russians at home and abroad by advocating the Commonwealth of Independent States citizenship. The Russians abroad also failed to establish strong roots in the region, largely due to opposition from the non-Russian states. At home, Russians remained culturally disoriented and nonresponsive to the government's attempts to initiate discussions about new "national idea," such as the one introduced by Yelstin immediately following his 1996 reelection as president.

In time, the appeal of nationalist ideas in Russia increased. Three factors contributed to it. The first had to do with the power of the Russian language. Combined, the community of those who preferred to speak Russian totaled about 30% of the entire population of the post-Soviet states outside Russia, which made it, as one scholar acknowledged, "not simply a marginal *national* European state, but a potential center of a revived, distinct *civilization*."[11]

The second factor was the growing role of the Russian Orthodox Church in the region. Russian religious nationalists advanced the notion of a Russian Orthodox empire capable of resisting the West, and they were not infrequently supported by the Church hierarchs, such as Patriarch Kirill.[12] At home and abroad, Russians increasingly viewed the Church as a leading authority in defining "Russianness." An example of such influence is the case of the punk band Pussy Riot. On February 21, 2012, the three members of the group danced near the altar of Russia's main cathedral by calling on the Mother of God to "chase Putin away." The court sentenced them to two years in jail for hooliganism—the verdict that human rights organizations and Western governments found "disproportionate."[13] Many

Russians, however, were offended by Pussy Riot's unsanctioned performance, tight clothing, and the incorrect way in which they crossed themselves. As many as 44% of Russians found the trial over the punk band's members "fair and unbiased," while only 17% said they did not believe the hearing was fair.[14]

Finally—due to Russia's economic success relative to its neighbors and peripheral regions—the nation confronted the uncontrolled flow of migrants of non-Slavic nationalities. Working illegally, many of them became involved in criminal networks in large cities, eliciting growing protests from the local population. As the government was failing to integrate labor immigrants, nationalist politicians, such as Vladimir Zhirinovski and Dmitri Rogozin, advocated imposing tight restrictions on immigration. By continuing with the theme of Russian expansionism, they also compared the Russian question in the former Soviet region with that of Germans and Koreans, presenting Russians as the largest divided nation on earth and insisting on the imminence of national re-unification.

In the meantime, a new isolationist thinking emerged to challenge both the Kremlin and the imperial nationalists. Several intellectuals and politicians of various convictions, including the blogger Alexei Navalny, played an important role in the articulation of a new movement.[15] The new nationalism was largely a middle-class phenomenon. Disappointed in the government's inability to regulate labor migration from the Muslim regions of the Caucasus and Central Asia, Russian city dwellers were often supportive of tighter restrictions on immigration. But they were especially critical of the Kremlin's subsidies for the republics of the Northern Caucasus, which they linked to crime, corruption, and disorder in the country. A particularly strong expression of tensions between ethnic Russians and non-Russians from the Caucasus was the riot of five thousand Russian nationalists and football fans on Manezh Square, Moscow, on December 11, 2010, against the release of five men from the Northern Caucasus suspected of murdering Russian football fan Yegor Sviridov. At the end of 2011, the nationalist-isolationist organizations joined the wave of public protests against falsified elections to the Duma and became regular critics of the government's policies as nondemocratic and disrespectful of demands by ethnic Russians.

The state criticized the isolationist trend and provided moderate support for imperial nationalism. In one of his preelection articles, Putin described ethnic Russians as "the core (*sterzhen'*) that binds the fabric" of Russia as a culture and a state.[16] He also responded to the demand to stop state subsidies for the republics of Northern Caucasus by raising the specter of fear of

state disintegration and comparing it to the Soviet breakup. When people begin to shout—'Stop feeding the Caucasus'—wait and tomorrow the appeal will inevitably follow—'Stop feeding Siberia, the Far East, the Urals, the Volga Region, and the Moscow Region. . . .' Those who were leading the way to the dissolution of the Soviet Union were acting under precisely those formulas."[17]

In addition, Putin acknowledged violations of ethnic Russians' rights by warning against labels such as "Russian fascism" and linking such violations to "flaws of the law enforcement system," "corruption," and "the ineffectiveness of power." Finally, he recognized the phenomenon of ethnic crime and argued, "In our conditions ethnic crime is not only a criminal problem but also a problem of state security."[18] Many of these points were previously made by imperial nationalists. Not surprising, some of them strongly endorsed Putin's article, calling it an expression of "unprecedented" support for the Russian nationalist movement.[19]

The State-Civilization

Putin's article signaled a departure from his earlier neglect of the nationality question in Russia and abroad. Throughout the 2000s, he was commonly dismissive of calls to address the issue by formulating a new version of the "Russian idea"[20] and instead filled his speeches with indicators of Russia's economic and political successes. The reference to the Russian people as "the core" (*sterzhen'*) of the state meant the recognition that modern nation-building cannot be fully divorced from considerations of ethnicity. This view is consistent with the position of those scholars of nationalism who have argued that modern nations have grown out of traditional communities and "primordial" ethnic features, such as religion, language, customs, and racial appearance, which have often been invoked in the struggle of nationalists in mobilizing support in their claims for the right of having "their own" state.[21]

Such recognition of the core role played by Russians in state-building did not mean, however, that Putin accepted the tenets of ethnic Russian nationalism. In the past, Putin had also expressed some support for ideas of Eurasianism and even the Soviet system. For instance, in August 2012 he spoke favorably of the concept of the Soviet people as a form of unifying various nationalities.[22] Rather, Putin's new ideas meant his realization of the need to have a unifying transnational idea with a recognition of ethnic Russians' role in it. His above-cited article, speeches, and public statements demonstrate

his preference for highlighting Russianness within the framework of the state-civilization.

The state-civilization is multi-ethnic phenomenon that Putin differentiates from the ethnicity-based state on the one hand and the American "melting pot" on the other. Rather than following either of these models, Russia has emerged as a "historic state," in which different ethnic groups coexist by sharing a common, civilizational identity.

> Russia arose and developed over the centuries as a multinational state. A state in which the process of mutual familiarization, mutual penetration, and the mixing of peoples on a family, friendship, and work level was constantly underway. Hundreds of ethnic groups living on their own land together with and alongside Russians. The development of enormous territories that filled the entire history of Russia was the joint work of many peoples.[23]

Putin's calls to leave behind the legacy of 1990s' separatism by arguing that "attempts to preach the ideas of building a Russian 'national,' mono-ethnic state are contrary to our entire thousand-year history" and are "the shortest path to the destruction of the Russian people and the Russian state system."[24] Along these lines, the new official nationalities strategy until 2025 was prepared and signed by Putin in December 2012. The strategy reintroduced Russia as a "unique socio-cultural civilization entity formed of the multi-people Russian nation" but, under pressures of Muslim constituencies, removed the reference to ethnic Russians as the core of the state.[25]

In addition to offering a new basis for unity at home, the new national ideology may serve as a blueprint for foreign policy. Its supporters abroad include those who gravitate to Russia due to a common historical experience, rather than merely ethnic bonds. The new motivation behind Russia's actions abroad were to rebuild relationships in the post-Soviet Eurasia by using what Putin once referred to as "the historical credits of trust and friendship."[26] In 2012, he instructed Russia's ambassadors to be more active in influencing international relations by relying on tools of lobbyism and soft power.[27] In response to those critical of the government for lacking a "civilizational mission" or an "image of a future,"[28] the Kremlin proposed to build the Eurasian Union as a new cross-ethnic community and a civilizational alternative to the European Union. The vision of Russia as a civilization in the world of competitive cultural visions has long been advocated by conservative critics of the Kremlin.[29] In response, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov spoke of

Table 13.1 State-Civilization Compared to Other National Ideologies

	Civic nation	Ethnic Russian empire	Ethnic nation	State-civilization
Ethnic autonomies	Dissolved	Suppressed	Suppressed and/or separated	Recognized within a common civilization
Identity/ citizenship	Civic	Ethnic Russian	Ethnic Russian	National multi-ethnic
Transnational idea	No	Eastern Christianity	No	Common civilization
Support group abroad	No	Ethnic Russians	No	Those historically gravitating to Russia
Foreign policy mission	No	Restoring Russian unity	No	Upholding cross-civilizational balance

the approach, which "holds that competition is becoming truly global and acquiring a civilizational dimension; that is, the subject of competition now includes values and development models."[30]

Table 13.1 summarizes the main differences of state-civilization from the discussed ideas of civic nation and ethnic Russian empire.

The Pitfalls of the New Ideology

It is too early to assess the success of the new ideology of state-civilization in fulfilling its objectives. Vladimir Putin and several Kremlin-affiliated intellectuals have embraced it, but it remains to be seen whether the concept of state-civilization will be developed into a coherent system of indoctrinating the nation. For example, the ideology is yet to be adopted by the contemporary systems of education and mass media. In the meantime, although it is presented as centrist in the sense of being able to bridge historical Russian values with those of non-Russian nationalities, the ideology's pitfalls may be related precisely to its centrist message. If the state lacks the will and administrative capacity to act on its new ideology by

restraining ethnic claims and projecting the image of an honest and effective arbiter in disputes involving various ethnic actors, ethno-nationalism will strengthen further.

One difficulty that the state faces lies in integrating non-Russian minorities and getting them to accept the new ideology. In particular, this concerns various Muslim communities that include those residing in the Northern Caucasus and upper Volga River region and migrants to Russia in other parts of Eurasia looking for work. Not only have some of them established relatively cohesive ethnic communities inside Russian cities (enclaves), but they have also successfully asserted their own linguistic and cultural rights, often at the expense of those of Russia. In Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, and other ethnic republics, the Russian language in primary schools is increasingly challenged by local languages. Russian history is being challenged by nationalist authors, who argue that Russia has promoted colonial and exploitative policies. Sharia Law is frequently proposed as a better alternative to the secular system of justice. Religious training abroad coupled with the political ambitions of ethno-republican leaders present a challenge for the federal center, especially given Russia's painful post-Soviet experience with Chechnya.[31]

A related difficulty is with integration of Muslim immigrants from the newly independent states of the Caucasus and Central Asia. There have been multiple examples of confrontation between ethnic Russians and Muslims in Russia. For example, on October 10, 2013, an immigrant from Azerbaijan killed the Russian Yegor Shcherbakov in Western Biryulevo, Moscow, which led to violence in the area of the city with attacks against the riot police and calls by some Russian media for pogroms against aliens of non-Russian origins. Similar outbreaks of violence previously took place in many other places including Kondopoga (2006), Moscow (2010), Kirov oblast (2011), Saratov oblast (2013), and others. The Russian think tank watching ethno-nationalist activities, SOVA, warned that 2013 witnessed a particularly sharp rise of radical nationalism and xenophobia.[32] The fact that the Kremlin continues the policy of actively relying on immigrant laborers from the Caucasus and Central Asia and even increasing their quota in 2014[33] makes their integration especially challenging.

The state must therefore walk a fine line between promoting the state-civilization model in public life and sustaining economic, political, and cultural privileges for ethnic communities. State actions, such as the occasionally proposed replacement of ethnic republics with nonethnic regions, are likely to exacerbate the tensions between non-Russian administrative entities and the Kremlin. A more successful approach would include a series

of long-term policies to assist migrants and minorities with their adjustment in terms of language and education.

On the other hand, the ideology of state-civilization will continue to be challenged by Russian nationalists. Their case is assisted by state corruption and ineffectiveness in combating ethnic crime in large cities. So long as the state remains weak, Russian nationalists will continue to be successful in rallying a considerable portion of the middle class to their cause. At the early stage of the ideology's development, nationalists are divided into two groups. While the isolationists view state-civilization as a continuation of the same imperialist policies at the ethnic Russians' expense, the imperialist nationalists have provisionally supported it. The latter group hopes that the state will eventually drop the odd term "state-civilization" in favor of the old Russian empire.[34] The imperial nationalists are disappointed with the state's nationalities strategy and the removal of the reference to ethnic Russians as the core of the state.

Because of its complex composition, Russia cannot follow other colonial powers in becoming a relatively homogenous nation-state. Therefore it may have to preserve some elements of old imperial policies. Herein lies the danger, for as one observer put it, "as a result, a future Russia risks combining the worst of both worlds."[35] In the absence of a strong state, Russia may continue to be prey to ethno-nationalists of various kinds—imperial Russian, isolationist Russian, and non-Russian—who will continue to clash with each other and avoid responsibility for their actions by bribing the authorities.

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14

Corruption

I have previously cited the dialogue between Peter I and the general prosecutor . . . . When the latter cited examples of theft, Peter proposed that people be exiled to Siberia and executed even for small, insignificant crimes. To which the prosecutor general replied: "Who will be left, your Majesty? We are all thieves."

VLADIMIR PUTIN[1]

The Origins of Russia's Corruption

Given the principal differences of Russia's political system from that of Western nations, it should come as no surprise that Russia's corruption is different as well. Russia's centralized system is designed to mobilize social resources for rapid economic development. Here, corruption is associated with diversion of public resources for individual purposes that undermines development and exacerbates the problem of backwardness. Partly due to the development imperative, the Russian state is not historically based on the separation of political and economic power. In the West, the fusion of political and economic power violates the principles of competition and is the core of corruption and ineffectiveness. This is because the system faces few external challenges, and the incentive for development lies within, rather than outside, society. In Russia, however, development is a necessary response to the external threats of backwardness. Under these conditions, the fusion of political and economic power, historically known as patrimonialism, is the norm, even if it functions as an informal, not a legally defined, practice. Various informal norms in the country are not replaced by legal institutions but instead coexist with them.[2]

Russia's corruption is therefore defined by the country's semi-peripheral place in the global economic system.[3] Naturally, members of the semi-peripheral or semi-dependent economy are eager to join the core of the system

with its wealth and multiple opportunities for growth. Motivated by greed or envy for the privileges provided by the core, Russian businessmen and women and bureaucrats are frequently tempted to violate the law.

Ideally, a strong state should compensate for the structural imbalance of the core–periphery relationship. Through punishments and other mobilization mechanisms such a state should discipline bureaucracy and all social classes by encouraging them to work toward common objectives. Under such a system, laws are tougher and may be supplemented by the ideological indoctrination of both elites and the masses. The role of ideology is usually played by nationalism or state-promoted national pride, with a code of honorable behavior for all citizens.

In practice, the tough laws are frequently violated, including by the rulers themselves. The fear of punishment and ideological indoctrination prove insufficient to ensure elite cohesion and personal loyalty. To accomplish the latter, the ruler devises a system of informal rewards for those in the court who are particularly effective in implementing state tasks. Already in the 15th century, Russian rulers were known for practicing the so-called *kormleniye* (feeding), under which the tsar's most loyal servants were provided with their own regional constituencies to exploit for private consumption. Under such a system, there are two different sets of rules: the formal ones for all and the informal ones are for those selected by the ruler. Here, corruption is a deviation not from the formal but, rather, from what the ruler decides. Those who are successful in implementing state orders are granted the right to obtain certain privileges such as bribes or other gifts for private gains. Such gains are informally limited and cannot be exceeded. As a Russian joke has it, bureaucrats are often imprisoned not for stealing but for stealing too much for their rank (*ne po chinu*). Therefore practices that are viewed as corruption in Western societies are fully integrated with the system and indeed necessary for it to perform its functions.[4]

Not being based exclusively on merit, such a system has a tendency to evolve into a network of cronies and friends. Russian monarchical courts were historically filled with various "favorites" who enjoyed special access to the tsar. This system is known to scholars of other regions as well. For example, in Latin America it is called the "lawfare state," when the law is practiced highly selectively and different standards are applied to members of a close circle according to the principle "for my friends, anything—for my enemies, the law."[5]

Corruption in Russia comes from two distinct sources: (i) predatory behavior of ruling elites involved in extortionist practices and stealing state

funds and (ii) exploitative behavior of private entrepreneurs evading taxation and diverting their capital away from the national economy. Both types of corruption are related to the country's semi-peripheral status: bureaucrats and members of the business class are in part motivated by greed and envy for the core's wealth and opportunities for growth. In the first case, members of the state divert public funds, lease state property, take payments for state services (fire inspection, tax, customs, etc.), or provide services for individuals—all for private gain. They may also be involved in "*reiderstvo*" (raiding) or acts of depriving business owners of their property using threats of state persecution.[6] In the second case, private entrepreneurs abuse the system by bribing the officials and evading taxation. Both problems are common in the West. However, in the case of Russia, multiple opportunities for business outside the country, especially in tax-free zones, tend to create the problem of capital flight. Many in Russia view the latter as a corrupt practice especially harmful to the country's development.

Given the status of a semi-dependent economy, corruption in Russia is generally more pervasive than in wealthy Western societies. Exceptions include times of state mobilization under emergency conditions when all citizens and elite members are expected to perform or be purged by the ruler. Stalin's system was known for being relatively free of corruption, as the ruler was practicing mass mobilization projects and terrorist methods of punishment for stealing and underperformance. Under Brezhnev, however, the system functioned in a more normal mode. Although strict laws for economic crimes—especially those involving currency trading—were enacted, Brezhnev relaxed the rules for the elites in the center and the republics in exchange for their political loyalty. The Soviet version of *kormleniye* progressed as the regime relied on petrodollars for political stability and was reluctant to introduce reforms in the economy.

In the 1990s, the already pervasive corruption spread further and took a qualitatively new form. To win the loyalty of elites, the new state allowed a massive privatization of wealth, thereby empowering a group of formerly influential members of the Soviet elite. In addition, in the time of chaos, members of organized crime actively participated in the division of property by joining the class of entrepreneurs and politicians. At the time, as Louise Shelley writes, "criminality was crucial to the acquisition of key sectors of the energy sector, aluminum, and natural resources."[7] The state became a hostage of oligarchs and organized crime—a phenomenon not previously known to Russia. Oligarchs were frequently in charge of not only major economic decisions but political ones as well. In 1998, the newly appointed prime

minister Primakov attempted to restore the state's ability to govern by prosecuting the most notorious oligarchs. However, like Brezhnev's successor Yuri Andropov, who cracked down on corruption, Primakov was not successful. He lacked resources and popular legitimacy and was soon fired by President Yelstin. The latter feared the prosecution of those providing economic support for his regime and understood stability differently than Primakov.

Corruption under Putin

After arriving to power in March 2000, Putin engaged in consolidating the state and disciplining political elites. To achieve these tasks, he deprived oligarchs of the power to influence major decisions in the Kremlin, and he empowered siloviks or those with a background in the security services, like Putin himself. Coming out of the chaos of the 1990s, the political class was divided and unable to serve the country by facilitating its unity and development. Putin sought to integrate the political class by demoting oligarchs and promoting siloviks, thereby establishing a special group personally loyal to him. The latter were not omnipresent in Russian politics in part because the old groups did not disappear entirely and because Putin also promoted some individuals with a nonsecurity background. Nevertheless, siloviks gained unquestionable prominence and pledged loyalty to him as his "new nobility." The latter referred to the long tradition of Russian rulers establishing their own group of elite supporters.

By the end of the 2000s, it became clear that Putin's arrangement to consolidate the political class had failed to address the problem of corruption. The new group of siloviks often became rich through extortionist practices and at the expense of public interests. The de-oligarchization[8] was followed by the strengthening of siloviks' economic and political power base. For example, Yukos was broken up and its assets were absorbed by the state company Rosneft, headed by Putin's closest confidant, Igor Sechin. Russian media revealed that siloviks were also actively involved in reiderstvo[9] and various commercial schemes to steal state property. In the mid-2000s, the media described a clash between two groups of siloviks, one led by director of the Federal Security Service, Nikolai Patrushev, and another by head of the Drug Enforcement Administration, Viktor Cherkesov. The conflict was in part over a commercial scheme by prominent siloviks to smuggle a large amount of furniture into Russia. It involved high-level arrests and was resolved with the firing of Cherkesov in May 2008.[10] Corruption-monitoring organizations noted high levels of corruption in Russia, especially among those controlling security

agencies. For example, in 2008 one such agency, Transparency International, identified Russia as the most corrupt country among the twenty-two most economically influential nations in the world. According to the study, those officials responsible for order, security, and licenses took the largest amount of bribes.[11] During the same year, corruption was recognized as reaching its peak of $120 billion annually or about one-third of Russia's budget.[12]

The situation did not improve after 2008. The overall level of bribes, the amount of economic crimes, and capital flight continued to increase. Anti-corruption agencies registered lack of improvement in the area, and domestic critics of Putin published a number of reports documenting various examples of government corruption.[13] In the assessment of some observers, the amount of kickbacks and various informal deals over the budget funds has increased about three times since the 1990s.[14] Putin and Medvedev tried to address the problem by highlighting its importance, empowering anti-corruption forces, and imposing declarations of income by government officials. Medvedev was especially active, setting up the Anti-Corruption Council and promising to deal with the problem by reducing government regulations for business, improving corporate governance in state-owned companies, and ensuring public oversight.[15] In 2009, he initiated the investigation of Sergei Magnitsky's case. Magnitsky was a lawyer who discovered significant fraud by Interior Ministry officials, but who himself was arrested and died in prison while awaiting trial. Medvedev ordered an independent probe and fired twenty top federal prison officials.[16] On the national level, he tried to address the problem of corruption by reducing the number of federal civil servants; he signed an executive order that reduced their size by 20% between 2011 and 2013.

However, the problem has become systemic. Putin's favored group, the siloviks, proved just as greedy and envious of the West as the oligarchs. In the case of Magnitsky, the Ministry of the Interior launched a counterattack by accusing him of fraud and protecting those officials implicated in the scandal.[17] Even more important, the state demonstrated an inability to enforce rules for the purpose of development. Putin's system of power was not working properly, with officials either not showing any initiative or merely sabotaging his instructions. During the forest fires in the summer of 2010, Putin, then prime minister, had to personally supervise the work of various agencies and fly to different areas to assess the damage on the ground. During the same year, he discovered the large costs of construction for projects such as the Sochi Olympics and the APEC summit in Vladivostok. Despite promises, costs kept increasing, revealing the growing appetites of those behind the projects. The frustrated Putin threatened the forced resignation of those

in charge.[18] The Sochi Olympics in February 2014 became a test of the state's ability to launch and complete a major development project. With over $50 billion spent on infrastructure and athletic facilities, the successfully completed project was the most expensive in the history of Olympics[19]—not the least due to involvement of large kickbacks and various schemes to divert state funds.[20]

By the time of the December 2011 protests, Putin was well aware of his system's deficiencies and used the opportunity to launch a new battle with corruption. The middle-class protests were first and foremost about political corruption (e.g., rigged voting for the State Duma), but many protest leaders also charged that the state was not doing enough to fight economic corruption. Putin's solutions went beyond those recommended by Medvedev and focused on addressing the problem of elite loyalty. To Putin, the extent of corruption indicated the predatory nature of the new elite that put its own interests ahead of those of the state. Soon after his election as president, he authorized the investigation of prominent ministries and government projects. The newly empowered Investigative Committee (IC), headed by Alexander Bastrykin, found incriminating materials about activities of officials of the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Education, the Rostelecom, the St. Petersburg governor, and government projects including the Sochi Olympics, the APEC summit, and Skolkovo, among others. In November 2012, Putin fired Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov amid allegations of corruption in the ministry and the ministry-controlled holding company, Oboronservis. While Serdyukov was not charged, the IC accused the former head of the ministry's property department, Yevgeniya Vasilyeva, of embezzling more than $12 million.[21]

The Fight with Corruption and Its Future

Soon after being elected president, Putin launched new anti-corruption policies. He formulated his objectives in preelection articles and then summarized them in his address to the Federation Council on December 12, 2012. Putin pointed to "poor government efficiency and corruption" as "major problems that every one can see," which he contrasted with "modern public administration."[22] The latter had to be result-oriented, transparent, and open to public scrutiny, motivated by both material and moral incentives. In particular, the president insisted on introducing important legal and ethical restrictions on public servants holding foreign accounts, stocks, and shares. "How can the public have confidence in an official or politician who says high-sounding

words about the national good but at the same time tries to take his money and assets out of the country?,"[23] he asked. He further emphasized the importance of controlling those agencies with the power of regulatory oversight, in which about one million people were employed. The series of proposed steps included having state agencies, the media, and the public monitor expenditures, salaries, and acquisitions of civil servants, state companies' executives, and their relatives. In executing these policies, Putin demanded firmness, as the central issue to him was that of restoring the state's "moral authority" as "a fundamental prerequisite for Russia's development."

The elaborate system of steps to fight corruption required a new political, moral, and legal environment. It also required a new commitment by leadership to change the state of public administration. Putin's chosen methods of implementing his anti-corruption policies included the formulation of a new nationalist ideology, passing tough new laws, and empowering a new group of anti-corruption crusaders controlled by the state. By implementing his proclaimed policies, the president hoped to satisfy public expectations. Russians view corruption as one of the biggest problems, revealed by polls as well as by the actions of public protesters. A poll in April 2013 showed that 46% of Russians want the struggle against corruption to become Putin's main mission (second only to the demand to promote economic growth, supported by 53% of the respondents).[24] Putin also hoped to change the environment for doing business in Russia. The latter was to be accomplished by the predictability of state rules and the repatriation of foreign assets held by Russian officials and members of the business class.

The new nationalist ideology for fighting corruption was soon identified as that of "elite nationalization." Through moral and legal incentives, the state planned to coerce the elite to move its property and financial assets from abroad. In his address to the Federation Council, Putin defined the target audience as "all officials who are in charge of key decisions: the top leaders of state and government, the senior staff in the Presidential Executive Office and their immediate families" and "members of the Federation Council and State Duma deputies."[25] In April 2013, the Russian parliament passed laws to support the president's vision by banning all the identified groups from holding foreign bank accounts. In addition to moral and legal incentives, the state empowered the IC and its head, Bastrykin, to lead the process of identifying corrupt officials.[26] The implication for elites was that corruption in exchange for political loyalty was no longer to be tolerated. The new deal seems to imply limited corruption in exchange for effectiveness in public administration.

By the summer of 2013, the first results of the anti-corruption policies became visible. These results were complex and ambivalent in their implications. First, the energetic work of the IC revealed multiple incidents of corruption in various ministries and government-controlled companies. As a result, some high-level officials were arrested. Others resigned. Still others, such as vice-president of the Sochi Olympics Committee responsible for the construction of key structures, Akhmed Bilalov, fled the country out of fear of being prosecuted. Second, several members of Russian parliament resigned. Some of them included Putin's allies, such as chair of the State Duma ethics committee, Vladimir Pekhtin, who had to vacate his parliamentary seat because he failed to declare his property abroad worth several million dollars. Third, some groups within the political establishment suffered from the anti-corruption policies more than others. In particular, the group with close ties to Medvedev sustained multiple attacks.[27] Fourth, no major improvement in the business environment occurred. International monitoring agencies still gave Russia low ratings, and capital flight from the country continued. Fifth, the public showed growing support for the anti-corruption policies. For instance, more than two-thirds of the population approved of the banning of state officials from having property and accounts abroad.[28]

It remains to be seen how successful the new course of fighting corruption will be. To be successful, it must meet at least three challenges. First, the course must not become a hostage to the political struggle between different groups within the establishment. Russia's political class is notoriously heterogeneous, and providing more support for the IC may undermine the delicate balance of power in the Kremlin. Some members of the establishment issued a warning that the struggle against corruption risks instability for government and business. For example, First Deputy Prime Minister Igor Shuvalov stated his concerns at the Russia 2013 Business Forum:

> We are beginning to accept irrational rules of behavior concerning any kind of foreign property. … The next step will be that because you worked in business for a year, you must have stolen something, and that excludes you from being a State Duma deputy, or a minister. You can't go around thinking all the time that you are surrounded by crooks.[29]

Shuvalov is wealthy and had to move his foreign assets back to Russia. The second, related challenge is to put the anti-corruption policies on firm legal

footing by getting away from the impression of being a temporary "campaign" launched by leadership. Last but not least, fighting corruption will not be successful without reducing the power of informal networks that became so prominent in maintaining Putin's system.[30] New ways of recruiting and educating public servants must be found outside of those channels based on personal loyalty alone.

To meet these challenges, Putin will have to confirm his skills as the power broker in the Kremlin, build a broad support for his anti-corruption drive, and strengthen institutions. His ability to perform the duties of power broker is challenged by a considerable segment of the elite not comfortable with Putin's new deal. This deal increasingly looks like one that pledges continued protection for those who demonstrate loyalty, patriotism, and professionalism. It is not based exclusively on coercion and may still include limited corruption and protection in inter-elite disputes.[31] Nevertheless, it does challenge the position of many who are accustomed to heavily rely on corrupt practices for their livelihood.

To compensate for his intra-elite weaknesses, Putin will have to broaden his public support by getting rid of his image as the protector of "crooks" in the Kremlin. Building a new political movement, the Popular Front, is a step toward winning such support. It may need to be accompanied by introducing a more elaborate ideology of patriotism for civil servants and members of the business class. For the members of Russian elites not to look to the West for their protection, education, and medical services, it is not enough to feel sufficiently protected at home. To work for their homeland and aspire to pass it to their children, they must also be bound by the ideology and morality of national honor.

Finally, strengthening public institutions for fighting corruption is equally important. These institutions must include not only those of public oversight but also of economic development. Without building such institutions and showing results in development, the struggle against corruption will not be effective. Improving business ratings is important for attracting foreign investments, but for long-term development it is no less significant to be able to control banks and process much of the revenue for industrial development, thereby creating well-paid jobs and undercutting the potential for political protest.[32] Such institution-building for economic development will go a long way toward improving the quality of bureaucracy, undermining the individualistic instincts of business elites, and reducing corruption within society and the political class.

Recommended Sources

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Tensions with the West

The instability of the partnership . . . is due in part to the tenacity of some well-known stereotypes and phobias, particularly the perception of Russia on Capitol Hill.

VLADIMIR PUTIN[1]

When President Putin . . . came back into power I think we saw more rhetoric on the Russian side that was anti-American, that played into some of the old stereotypes about the Cold War contests between the United States and Russia.

BARACK OBAMA[2]

THE ARRIVAL OF Vladimir Putin to the presidency in March 2012 created new tensions in Russia's relations with the West, particularly with the United States. These tensions revealed an inability of the two sides to continue with the policy of narrowing differences over strategic issues known as the "reset" and added to the list of growing problems experienced by Putin's system.

The Lack of Framework for Russia–West Relations

Externally, Russia's development is dependent on stable relationships with the West. Although Russia is unable to fully integrate with the Western world, Moscow cannot be successful without political recognition, cooperation over security issues, and relative economic openness vis-à-vis the West. Internally, such international stability translates into favorable relations between the state and the pro-Western opposition. The latter commands the support of some 20% to 30% of the population—usually concentrated in large cities—and may present a serious challenge for the government, as evident from the protests of late 2011–2012. In their turn, Western nations expect Russia to cooperate with them globally and to reform its political system to establish a greater openness to opposition and respect for minorities.

Such a state of relations is potentially unstable, for each side tends to expect more than the other can deliver. While Russia desires extensive cooperation with the West on the basis of respect for its interests and values, Western nations have their own global interests and are frequently uncomfortable with Russia's strong state system. As a result, the agenda of Russia–West relations tends to be narrower than desired by either side. In addition, the institutional framework for working together is typically weak, and presidential commitment is required for moving the relationships forward.

These considerations help to explain the failure of Russia and the United States to continue with the reset policy initiated by President Obama during Medvedev's presidency. The reset approach helped to solve a number of important issues in the two countries' relations. They signed and ratified the new START by limiting the number of strategic nuclear missiles and banning the deployment of strategic weapons outside of national territories. Russia and Western nations also cooperated on Iran by agreeing on sanctions to encourage its leadership to be transparent about its nuclear program. In addition, Russia–West relations notably improved in the area of stabilizing Afghanistan, with the Kremlin agreeing to US military overflights and overland transportation of non-military cargo. Finally, the two sides improved economic relations. Russia gained membership in the World Trade Organization and facilitated a number of important energy deals with American and European companies.

However, the reset proved limited, exhausting its agenda by 2011. The Western nations indicated that they expected more cooperation from Russia globally, while the Kremlin expressed growing frustration with what it saw as insufficient cooperation on the part of the West. Concerned about Washington's plans to deploy elements of the Missile Defense System (MDS) in Europe, Medvedev sought initially to address the issue by establishing a good rapport with Barack Obama, cooperating with the United States on Iran and the new nuclear treaty, and proposing to develop MDS jointly. Yet in November 2010 Medvedev issued a warning that a new arms race may take place should Russia and the Western nations fail to agree on a "full-fledged joint mechanism of cooperation" on MDS.[3] By the end of the year, the president also showed signs of frustration with the lack of acceptance of his initiative on European security. In the beginning of his term, he proposed a new all-European treaty to establish a new security architecture by moving beyond NATO expansion and the conflict over Kosovo,[4] but Western nations remained wary of Medvedev's initiative and offered only general support.[5]

Russia and the West also opened a new front of disagreements over the Middle East. In March 2011 Medvedev instructed the Russian ambassador to the United Nations to abstain on the UN Security Council Resolution on Libya, allowing the no-fly zone to take place. The president even publicly reprimanded Putin, who called the resolution "defective and flawed" and "allowing everything." Medvedev called Putin's statement (without calling him by name) "unacceptable."[6] Yet in several months, in another reversal, Medvedev opposed a Libya-style resolution on Syria. In February 2012 Russia, acting jointly with China, vetoed the Syria resolution in the UN Security Council out of fear that it would lead to a military intervention and regime change in Syria, as happened in Libya. Instead, the Kremlin pushed for negotiations between Bashar al-Assad and the military opposition. As Western nations and several Syrian neighbors moved to support the opposition, Russia held them responsible for reneging on the earlier deal and instigating instability in the world.[7]

The New Challenges from the West

The return of Putin to the presidency in March 2012 was accompanied by growing criticisms of Russia's domestic system and human rights record by Western nations. Opponents of deep engagement with Russia have always been strong in the West. Many in Europe and the United States do not believe that Moscow is interested in deepening cooperation with the West and advocate a tougher approach to Russia. In the United States, proponents of such views were loud under President George W. Bush. The rhetoric of an "aggressive" Russia was also heard during the United States' presidential elections in November 2012, when several prominent politicians called for cancelling the "reset" and severing ties with Russia, who is "without questions our number one geopolitical foe."[8]

Members of Obama's administration were rarely engaged in criticisms of Russia under Medvedev from 2009–2011, as the United States worked to strengthen relations with him at the expense of Putin.[9] Nevertheless, such criticisms grew strong after Obama's reelection. In addition to the shift of power back to Putin, this was a response to new policies by the Kremlin that Washington found difficult to accept. In particular, Western nations reacted critically to Putin's attempts to reassert power domestically, in Eurasia, and the Middle East.

With respect to Russia's domestic politics, Western leaders voiced their disagreement with the handling of protesters by the Kremlin. For example,

a Russian court sentenced members of the punk band Pussy Riot to two years in jail for hooliganism. Three members of the group danced near the altar of Russia's main cathedral by calling on the Mother of God to "chase Putin away." Western governments expressed their strong disagreement with the decision almost immediately after the verdict. The US State Department called the punishment "disproportionate" and urged the Russian authorities to "ensure that the right to freedom of expression is upheld." Strong criticisms were also issued by heads of European governments.[10]

Another expression of US–Russian disagreement concerned the case of Russian lawyer Sergei Magnitsky, who was defending a foreign firm but was arrested and died while in detention. In December 2012, the US Congress, while normalizing trade relations with Russia, passed the bill named after Magnitsky that imposed visa bans and asset freezes on human rights violators in Russia. The Russian State Duma retaliated by passing the "Anti-Magnitsky Act," which targets US citizens whom Russia considers to be violators of human rights and bans the adoption of Russian children by US citizens. The crisis provoked speculation of a new Cold War in the making, with US–Russia relations being jeopardized by a weak presidency in Washington.[11] Obama did not initially support the Magnitsky Act but signed it because the repeal of the Jackson-Vanik amendment was attached to it and because there was so much support in both chambers of Congress for the bill.

The United States also expressed disappointment with Russia's new law against propaganda of "non-traditional sexual relations among minors" passed in June 2013. According to the Kremlin, the law does not seek to police adults but aims to protect children from information that rejects "traditional family values." Eighty-eight percent of Russians supported the law.[12] However, many human rights activists in the United States and Europe saw it as an "anti-gay law" by calling to boycott Russian vodka and the Winter Olympics in Sochi. President Obama also publicly spoke against the new legislature and declared that he has "no patience for countries that try to treat gays, lesbians or transgender persons in ways that intimidate them or are harmful to them."[13] Overall, the issue added to the American image of Russia as disrespectful of minority rights.

In the meantime, Russia and the West continued to diverge on foreign policy issues. In response to Putin's initiative to build a new union among the Commonwealth of Independent States, US secretary of state Hillary Clinton referred to it as "re-Sovietization" and promised to find "effective ways to slow down or prevent it."[14] Speaking for many in the US political class, Republican senator John McCain called the proposed Eurasian Union "an

old idea that the Russians have had dating back to the days of the tsars."[15] Even though Putin emphasized the open nature of the proposed union and laid out economic incentives for joining it, European leaders also perceived the idea as threatening. They were especially concerned about Ukraine being pulled into the Russia-centered union and worked against it by characterizing the proposed arrangement as anti-European and offering Kiev an opportunity to sign an Association Agreement with the European Union. The Western leaders were also supportive of a change of power in Ukraine in February 2014 and recognized the new government in Kiev despite Russia's objections against what it saw as an anti-constitutional coup by radical nationalists. When Putin intervened in Crimea by sending additional troops to the region on February 28, 2014, the United States and Canada threatened to apply a broad range of sanctions against the country and its officials and expel Russia from the G8. European governments found such steps to be unnecessary and potentially counterproductive.[16] President Obama referred to Russia's intervention as a clear violation of the independence and sovereignty of Ukraine that was "deeply destabilizing" and would incur "costs."[17] Russia and the West disagreed sharply on Syria. As Western nations supported the military opposition, the Kremlin expressed concerns about instability in the country and the wider region after Assad and strengthened ties with those within the Syrian opposition interested in working with Russia. Putin blamed European and American leaders for spreading instability in the Middle East, "Our partners … have already created chaos in many territories, and now they are continuing the same policy in other countries, including Syria. . . . We did warn that prudent action was needed and that it would be wrong to try to achieve anything by force, otherwise chaos would ensue. And what do we see today? Chaos prevails."[18] As the United States accused Bashar al-Assad's regime of using chemical weapons against military opposition, Russian officials responded by rejecting such accusations and characterizing them as an effort to derail a planned peace conference on Syria.[19] Since the appointment of John Kerry as the new secretary of state, the United States and Russia tried to organize such a conference. However, the attempts at negotiations in Geneva in February 2014 proved unsuccessful in part due to lack of a unified approach of the United States and Russia. Washington again raised the issue of regime change by refusing to recognize Assad, whereas Moscow insisted on negotiations between Syria's existing government and opposition.

In addition, there was no progress on nuclear issues. The United States indicated that it was interested in further nuclear reductions but not in establishing the joint MDS preferred by Russia. President Obama wrote a long

letter to the Kremlin explaining his interest in reducing strategic nuclear warheads in the United States by an additional one-third beyond the START. Russia, however, did not want to consider any further cuts, viewing nuclear force as the basis of national defense and international stability. In the words of Russia's deputy foreign minister, Sergei Ryabkov, "Before discussing the necessity of a further reduction of nuclear weapons we need to arrive at an acceptable solution of the ABM [anti-ballistic missile] problem."[20]

Finally, in June 2013 Russia and the West had to confront yet another problem caused by defection of the former Central Intelligence Agency employee Edward Snowden to Russia. In the eyes of the US political class, Snowden was a traitor for making public the surveillance activities by the US government over its citizens because of its importance in the fight against terrorism. Washington therefore expected Moscow to turn Snowden over to the United States, not grant him political asylum.[21] When Putin refused to comply, members of the American political class threatened a full range of retaliatory steps, from cancelling Barack Obama's trip to Moscow to expanding the Magnitsky list and severing economic and military ties with Russia. The effect was the opposite, as on August 7 the Kremlin granted Snowden asylum. Soon afterward, Obama expressed his disappointment with the decision and canceled a bilateral summit with Putin scheduled for September in Moscow.

The developments since Putin's return to presidency revealed the extreme fragility of Russia's relations with the United States and the West in general. The canceled summit ended the era of reset, revealing the lack of an agenda for moving forward. Rather than being merely a result of Obama's "disappointment" with Russia's handling of Snowden, the decision reflected the fears of the US president of returning from the summit empty-handed. On all major issues, Russia and the United States had little to agree on. What was missing in the West was the leadership and ability to offer a bold vision of tackling the world's problems jointly with Russia. In the late 1980s, such a vision by Presidents Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev helped jointly to end the Cold War, moving the world toward a new era. Rather than trying to offer such vision, Obama continued to be driven by anti-Russian views shared by many in the West.[22] Critics of Russia were especially strong in the US Congress and media circles. Obama showed his desire to work with Russia on a number of issues from nuclear nonproliferation to counterterrorism, regional stability, and economic development, but he expected the Kremlin to be a junior partner in his plans and was not willing to risk his relations with domestic constituencies over Russia.

The Response from the Kremlin

Russia's response to the new challenges posed by the West indicated that the Kremlin was no longer motivated by the same vision of a normal great power articulated by Putin in the early 2000s. The vision assumed the need to gain recognition of Russia's interests through the preferential development of economic and political ties with the Western world. Since then the world had changed in the direction of a new power balance. The West's ability to project global power was challenged in two principal ways. The Russia–Georgia war undermined the United States' and Europe's monopoly on the use of force in world politics; and the global financial meltdown revealed the West's economic vulnerability. Although Russia was hit hard by the global economic crisis, it is the altered position of the Western nations in the international system that is likely to affect the world for many years to come. The Kremlin took notice and began to act assertively in promoting Russia's values and interests. Medvedev's effort to "normalize" ties with the West was the last attempt to do so while ignoring the changing structure of the international system.

Putin's return to the Kremlin meant a continuation of the effort to carve out a new role for Russia in the international system by challenging the established position of Western nations. The 2008 Foreign Policy Concept already recommended that Russia remain true to a "balanced multi-vector approach" in light of the West's gradual departure from the world's economic center.[23] In February 2013, Russia released a new Foreign Policy Concept that further developed the ideas of transition toward a multipolar structure of the international system and the emergence of new threats outside of those connected to nuclear weapons. The concept began by stating that "the capabilities of the historically established West to dominate the global economy and politics continue to decline" and "the global potential of strength and growth is dispersing and shifting eastwards, particularly towards the Asia Pacific region."[24] The document also emphasized global economic competition, in which different "values and development models" would be tested and "civilization identity" would obtain a new importance. In this context civilization was understood to be a distinct cultural entity, not a universal phenomenon. Russia was beginning to see itself as culturally and politically independent from the West. In multiple statements, Putin further criticized what he saw as Europe's departure from traditional religious and family values. In his Valdai Club speech, he quoted Russian traditionalist thinkers and declared "the desire for independence and sovereignty in spiritual, ideological and

foreign policy spheres" as an "integral part of our national character."[25] In his 2013 address to the Federation Council, Putin further positioned Russia as a "conservative" power and the worldwide defender of traditional values.[26]

By assuming the end to Western domination and the United States' "unipolarity" in the international system, the Kremlin developed new expectations about the West. In particular, it expected Western nations to stop with their assertive projection of power and values. Projects such as NATO expansion and democracy promotion were to be replaced by the coordination of Western policies with other powers and their recognition as equal participants in shaping world order. The Kremlin anticipated growing international opportunities for promoting its interests and values outside Europe and the United States and was prepared to exercise its options independently should the West chose to ignore Russia's new international ambitions. Therefore Moscow's new international posture assumed a dual response to the challenge posed by the West: limited cooperation in areas of mutual interests and assertiveness/active promotion of alternative international ties in those areas where such cooperation was not possible.

The Kremlin continued to cooperate with Western nations on issues of stabilizing Afghanistan, counterterrorism, and economic development. The Russian leadership remained concerned that the US military withdrawal from Afghanistan could mean grave consequences for the security of the country and the broader Central Asian region. For its part, Russia helped Afghanistan with training its military, police, and anti-drug specialists as well as offered economic aid. On counterterrorism, Russia provided intelligence for Western nations. In particular, Russian intelligence services warned the Federal Bureau of Investigations and the Central Intelligence Agency about the radicalization of Zubeidat Tsarnaev, who became involved in the Boston Marathon bombing in April 2013. Tsarnaev sought ties with radical Islamists in Russia and became further radicalized upon his return to the United States.[27]

Russia also maintained intelligence contacts with Western countries over developments in the Syrian civil war. Despite its sharp disagreement with the West's understanding of the conflict, the Kremlin kept looking for ways to engage it in a joint process of stabilizing the region. In August 2013, the United States accused Assad of using chemical weapons against opposition on a mass scale—with 1,400 casualties, including women and children—and announced its preparedness for a military intervention in Syria. In explaining the decision, Secretary of State Kerry remarked that intervention was necessary to prevent future use of chemical weapons by Damascus because

Assad was not about to do what was necessary, that is, destroy his weapons. In response, Russia proposed the development of an international process of monitoring and eliminating Syrian chemical weapons. The Kremlin disagreed that it was Assad who used the weapons, but it wanted to initiate a new dialogue with Western nations on the Middle East. In September, Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov reached an agreement on phased elimination of Syria's chemical weapons. Russia also supported the UN Security Council binding resolution demanding that Syria abandon its weapons stockpile and that the chemical weapons experts be given full access to their sites.[28]

In addition, Russia continued to press for the development of economic relations with Western nations. Russian energy companies signed a number of important agreements with ExxonMobil and British Petroleum, including on joint exploration of the Arctic. The Russian economy was also in need of foreign investment, and the Kremlin is well aware of negative perception of Russia's business climate by Western investors. Indeed, in Putin's view, problems in relations with the West were strongly influenced by weak economic cooperation:

> The main problem is that bilateral political dialogue and cooperation do not rest on a solid economic foundation. The current level of bilateral trade falls far short of the potential of our economies. The same is true of mutual investments. We have yet to create a safety net that would protect our relations against ups and downs. We should work on this.[29]

To improve the situation, the Kremlin hired public relations agencies in the West, funded radio and TV programs with pro-Russian news coverage, and established organizations and rating agencies to combat the negative perception of Russia. Putin ordered the government to improve Russia's ranking in the World Bank's Doing Business Index from one hundred twentieth in 2011 to twentieth by 2018. Russia also hired the US banking company Goldman Sachs to strengthen the image of the country's investment potential abroad. In addition, Russia's role as a successful host of the Sochi Olympics in February 2014 and the excellent performance of Russian athletes in the games served to improve the country's international reputation.

Despite these examples of cooperation, the Kremlin stood firm on issues that it saw vital to Russia's national security. Immediately after being elected as president, Putin indicated his displeasure with the United States' stance

on the MDS by canceling his trip to the NATO summit in Chicago. He insisted on Russia's distinct position on Syria and the Middle East by refusing to support the West-sponsored UN Security Council resolutions. He further placed the emphasis on Russia's insecurity as a result of the West's nuclear policies. For example, he refused to renew the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Program, which experts viewed as a response to the United States' insistence on continuing with its MDS program. Although Putin expressed willingness to cooperate on nonproliferation issues, he said that a more pressing priority was to address the United States' MDS plans in Europe.[30] When the United States canceled the bilateral summit with Russia over Snowden, Moscow expressed a formal readiness to continue dialogue but showed few signs of being disappointed. The Kremlin also seemed unaffected by Western criticisms of Russia's political system and human rights record, pressing ahead with the Anti-Magnitsky Act and restrictions on the activities of Western nongovernmental organizations and radical opposition inside the country. The decision to provide the defector with asylum reflected Putin's preparedness to accept the consequences of worsening relations with the United States.

A major example of Russia–West disagreements concerned the situation in Ukraine where the Kremlin interfered in February 2014 out of fear of a broadening political and military destabilization in the country. According to Putin, Western nations were behind the revolutionary change of power in Ukraine without understanding their destabilizing consequences. In justifying his intervention in Crimea, Russia's president said that he acted on behalf of overthrown but still legitimate president of Ukraine Victor Yanukovich and that the action was necessary to safeguard Russia's military fleet in the Black Sea and prevent violence and violation of human rights in the region by the "rampage of Nazi, nationalist, and anti-semitic forces."[31] As the United States and the European Union were considering various steps to isolate Russia internationally in response to its intervention in Ukraine, Putin was defiant that his action was fully legitimate and that, "if we see such uncontrolled crime spreading to the eastern regions of the country, and if the people ask us for help, while we already have the official request from the legitimate President, we retain the right to use all available means to protect those people."[32]

Such positions in part reflected the belief by Russia's president in the strengthening of ties in Eurasia and outside the Western world. In one of his landmark speeches, delivered to Russian ambassadors and permanent representatives in international organizations, Putin called for collective

solutions to the world's problems, yet he also made it clear that "the foreign policy of Russia was, is and will remain independent [which] reflects a unique role that … this country plays in world affairs."[33] In his December 2012 presidential address, Putin insisted on Russia's "geopolitical relevance," which the country must increase further:

> Russia must not only preserve its geopolitical relevance—it must multiply it, it must generate demand among our neighbors and partners. I emphasize that this is in our own interest. This applies to our economy, culture, science and education, as well as our diplomacy, particularly the ability to mobilize collective actions at the international level. Last but not least it applies to our military might that guarantees Russia's security and independence."[34]

With such a consistent worldview, Putin continued bilateral pressures on Ukraine and other former Soviet states in an attempt to build upon Russia's influence in Eurasia. The Kremlin also worked on strengthening its relations with China, Iran, and India and to exploit non-Western institutional vehicles, such as the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) and Shanghai Cooperation organizations.

The Uncertain Future

The absence of mutual trust and an institutional framework in Russia–West relations will continue to weaken the chances to put bilateral relations on a stable footing. Such a state of affairs is further complicated by the described differences in the two sides' perception of each other's values, interests, and relative strength in the international system. American observers frequently blame Russia for its psychological inability to accept diminution of its status after the end of the Cold War, yet there is also a deep "unacknowledged psychological reason" that "drives Americans to blame Russia" for denying them the "final, morally satisfying victory in the Cold War by refusing to take the path to free-market democracy they prescribed as the endpoint of the exit from totalitarian communism."[35] The two psychological complexes tend to perpetuate the cycle of mistrust and suspicion.

The perception of Russia and the Kremlin as unfriendly for business, disrespectful of political opposition, and engaged in bullying neighbors is going to be hard to change. The distinctiveness of Russian values and interests require a large capital of trust to make the relationship with Russia work—the capital

that the two sides lack. Historically, they have had multiple examples of cooperation but usually in response to a common security threat rather than during times of peace. The weakness of their economic interdependence and lack of affinity for each other's political values has made it easier for Russia and the West to turn away from promising cooperation projects each time that they have found the other side's actions to be disrespectful. This is especially true of the United States and Europe, which view their institutions as "democratic" and therefore superior to those of "authoritarian" Russia.

The two sides are therefore likely to experience more crises in their relations in the future. In the absence of committed leadership, progress, if it is to be made, is likely to be slow and incremental. It will take time to grow constituencies in Russia and the Western nations with the ability to turn their relations around. In the West such constituencies interested in developing stronger ties with Russia based on equality and mutual respect are likely to include members of the business community, especially if the Russian economy demonstrates the ability to generate growth and development. Another potential constituency includes those who appreciate Russia's contribution to world culture and want to expand ties with the country in religious, academic, and cultural areas. Finally, there are many within the intelligence community who are especially concerned with security issues and regional stability and are willing to work jointly with Russia on their solutions. Despite their differences, Russian values and interests are not in fundamental opposition to those of Western nations and do not make the country an enemy of the West. However, Russia's distinctiveness produces an irony: the more that the Western politicians expect the Kremlin to comply with their standards and institutions, the less likely Russia is to accept them at home and abroad. In the longer run their leaders may learn to cooperate in a more mature way.

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Conclusion

16

Whither the Russian State?

[A weak state is] a luxury that only people living under exceptionally favorable conditions can afford.

IVAN ILYIN[1]

Is the Russian State Historically Viable?

The Russian state has demonstrated its historical vitality over the course of centuries. It encouraged the emergence of an authentic culture, established the country's political independence, and gained the status of a great power recognized by the outside world. The centralized state was frequently behind many of the Russian searches for higher truth (*istina*) and beauty, sponsoring various cultural and technological projects and sending a man into space. Located at the intersection of various cultures and traditions, Russia learned from them while preserving and developing its own national features. It has also endured strong external pressures by becoming a politically sovereign nation and establishing a locus of decision-making inside the country. Finally, not only has it not been colonized by other powers (except for the Mongol occupation), but since the early 18th century it has emerged as a great power. For the last three centuries, Russia has been a maker, rather than a taker, of international rules, enjoying the influence and prestige of a global power.

Russia has achieved its cultural and political independence against some tough odds. Soon after migrating to Eurasia, Eastern Slavs confronted the challenge of mastering a vast space with a harsh climate. Related to open space and porous geographic borders were multiple threats of foreign invasion from the West and the South. Russians had to learn advanced fighting skills and place the importance of funding their military on top of policy priorities. In addition, since the 1700s, Russia has emerged as a late developer or a semi-peripheral country struggling to overcome its backwardness relative

to better-developed Western economies. The latter condition placed an additional constraint on funding Russia's defense capabilities.

How, despite the odds, did Russians become the Russians we know today? Of many historical factors, it is important to highlight Slavic cultural inheritance. The culture of Slavs and Eastern Slavs in particular proved sufficiently mature to sustain influences from Vikings, Khazars, Tatars, and many other peoples by learning their habits and customs and intermarrying with them. Another critically important factor was leadership. For example, the choice by Prince Vladimir for Rus' to become a student of Byzantium was worthy of a great statesman, given the civilization's centrality to the world's spiritual development. Two and half centuries later, another prince, Alexander Nevski of Novgorod, entered an alliance with the Golden Horde against Sweden that assisted Russia in preserving its culture and religion. Unlike Westerners, the Mongols did not seek to convert Russians to their own style of living, despite imposing the fiscal burden of a tributary system on the northern lands. Among other historically important factors, due should be given to Russia's authentic administrative know-how—the strong state. The state's ability to mobilize frequently deficient resources was instrumental in solving ambitious historical tasks. When it was led by forward-looking and committed leadership, the state was successful in various endeavors, from defending Russia from foreign invasion to moving it to a next stage in economic and technological development.

The price for success has been high, at times unbearably so. Although Russians became more independent, powerful, educated, cultured, and economically advanced, they suffered enormous losses. Indeed, it is difficult to find another nation in history that was subjected to a comparable amount of suffering, coercion, and violence, including by its own state. Extreme circumstances dictated that the state be centralized and decisive, yet centralization and decisiveness have their reverse effects. In addition to the large human toll, such effects include the weakness of local initiative, large bureaucracies, unaccountable leadership, a complacent Church, and popular suspicion toward private property and pluralist democracy. The institutional deficiencies of the strong state are such that during times of mobilization it tends to abuse its own citizens—even when it does so on their behalf and in the name of their prosperity. During normalization regimes, it reveals its own corruption, procrastination, and overall administrative inefficiency. This bureaucratic paralysis is accompanied by state myopia, as leaders tend to miss or react inadequately to protest developments within the system and thereby undermine its credibility in the eyes of its own citizens.

Does the strong state model remain viable today? The answer is not conclusive. Consolidation of the state after the Smuta of the 1990s was necessary to curb the predatory instincts of the oligarchs, end the war in Chechnya, improve living standards, and instill the sense of pride and stability in the country's citizens. Under generally favorable international conditions the state reversed the trend of disintegration and remained popular throughout most of the 2000s. However, the end of the decade highlighted the familiar problems of Russia's state system. Although high human cost is not among them, bureaucratic paralysis and leadership myopia are. The signs of paralysis are in political infighting within the Kremlin, corruption, and economic slowdown. Russian media sources routinely report that only about 30% of presidential decrees are implemented.[2] Indicators of the leadership's myopia include its belated recognition of political protest and contradictory reactions to it by different factions within the state. A reflection of the latter is the story of Aleksei Navalny, one of the opposition's leaders. In July 2013 he was convicted and sentenced to five years in prison on embezzlement charges but then released from custody under pressure of some members of the ruling class and he even took part in elections.[3] Then in October 2013 he walked free from court but was effectively disqualified from politics.[4]

Since the end of the 2000s, Russia's state system has been in crisis. Formally it remains a strong state with large constitutional powers vested in the president. In practice, however, it is a weak state that is frequently unable to deliver on its promises. Russians are increasingly disappointed in the system and its key architect, Vladimir Putin. According to a poll conducted in August 2013, 41% of respondents believed that the "power vertical," which brings regional and municipal authorities under the federal government's close control, aids corruption compared to 18% of those who say that it helps to fight corruption. The same poll revealed that 55% of Russians identified bringing authorities under greater public control as the main issue that the country currently faces.[5] According to another poll, 22% of respondents were disappointed in Putin, and 15% did not support him. Another 5% were ready to support anybody but him. Finally, 18% were ready to support him but only "if there are no other worthy candidates." Overall, 60% favored a political alternative to Putin.[6] In the second half of 2013–first half of 2014, Putin's ratings improved considerably, partly in response to successful organization of the Sochi Olympics and the annexation of Crimea, but the question remains whether the system's crisis will be addressed from the above or will result in a political destabilization.

Unfinished Business

The current crisis of Russia's strong state system may result in different outcomes. It may push the system toward reforming itself by making executive power more efficient and open to influences from outside the ruling circles. Alternatively, the crisis may exacerbate the stagnant situation by encouraging the system's disintegration. Historically, three forces were responsible for such an outcome: acute foreign threats, rising social classes, and weak leadership. Some of these forces are at work in today's Russia. Although the country faces no threat of foreign invasion, it is not politically stable. By different calculations, 20% to 30% of the population is leaning toward rejecting the strong state system in favor of a European state that has a greater respect for individual rights. This attitude has partial roots in the higher living standards and social aspirations of the 2000s and is difficult to reverse. The more prosperous that Russians become, the more likely they are to support change, all things being equal. If the Kremlin misreads the signals, Russia may go through a Smuta and radical transformation of its system yet again. It is impossible to predict what kind of a system that may result from it.

For the current system to survive, it must confront some formidable challenges that the country faces in the 21st century. The most important of them is the challenge of development. Although largely successful relative to the fifteen years of decline (1990–2005),[7] Russia is only modestly successful relative to the rising challenges ahead. This pattern is noticeable in multiple areas of its development. Russia can report successes in some areas but continues to stagnate and fall behind in others. It has met some of its economic and security challenges, but it has also perpetuated an insufficiently diversified economic structure and weak social infrastructure. Government promises notwithstanding, high oil prices slowed down its work to reduce reliance on energy exports. In terms of gross domestic product, Russia's gap with the United States is not likely to be narrowed in any meaningful way and will continue to widen relative to China and India.

Russia's other important challenges are the areas of demography, the political system, public administration, ideology, and foreign policy. The country's aging and declining population can only be reversed by massive state intervention and years of sustained economic growth. Russia's indicators of life expectancy and infant mortality have been deteriorating since the years of Perestroika. These indicators have begun to improve since 2005 but only marginally so relative to the late 1980s. Russia's human development index has yet to reach to the level of 1990. In addition, the leadership remains

suspicious of raising the political aspirations of the urban middle class. From an administrative standpoint, the current state is not sufficiently consolidated, lacking both the legitimacy and capacity to isolate the pressures of special interests. Furthermore, after the disintegration of the communist system, Russians continue to live in an ideological vacuum, lacking a guiding idea of development. The Kremlin is yet to articulate values suitable for economic modernization by building on Russia's usable past.[8] Finally, in part because it is perceived by many in the world as a corrupt power with the ruling elite preoccupied with personal enrichment, Russia has problems with strengthening international economic relations.

As Russia seeks to meet these challenges it should not abandon the historically resilient model of a strong state. Calls to adopt the "well-tested" Western-style system are either misinformed or ill-intentioned. For at least two reasons Russian leaders will not succeed in following this advice. The first reason is that the Russian economy belongs to the world's semi-periphery, with a strong potential to export natural resources and a relative weakness in the areas of services and manufacturing.[9] Without a strong state, the country will continue to be a resource-oriented economy that will fail to create sustainable competition with advanced economies of the core. As Immanuel Wallerstein notes, "In those states in which the state machinery is weak, the state managers do not play the role of coordinating a complex industrial-commercial-agricultural mechanism. Rather they simply become one set of landlords amidst others, with little claim to legitimate authority over the whole."[10] Indeed, faced with growing competition from China, India, Turkey, and others, the Russian challenge within the next two decades is not to move up to the core but rather not to fall behind the group of semi-peripheral states.

Another reason Russia cannot follow the West to become a competitive system has to with the country's political culture. A decentralized state with weak social obligations is simply not what Russians have historically supported. Russian philosopher Ivan Ilyin called such a state "a luxury that only people living under exceptionally favorable conditions can afford." Throughout centuries, the Russian state has had simultaneously to meet multiple challenges: defuse foreign threats, develop and populate the world's largest territory—including the remote areas of Siberia and Far East—guarantee certain living standards for people, and manage a high level of national diversity in its land. Russian people are mentally accustomed to a strong state, and it would be presumptuous to think that they would settle for less than that. Although the strong state model is in a deep institutional crisis, it is

alive and well in people's minds. The Russian state therefore has some important obligations, which are acknowledged, at least rhetorically, by its leaders. For instance, according to Putin, "Russia is characterized by a tradition of a strong state," which explains why "the main public demands are addressed to the state: to guarantee civil rights and justice, to reduce violence and social inequality, to restore order in the housing and utilities sector, and so on."[11]

If the state fails to deliver on those expected obligations, Russians are more likely to support politicians who promise social order and stability rather than those favoring Western-style individual rights. Today about half of Russians view Brezhnev and Stalin positively, as opposed to only one-fifth holding such views about Gorbachev and Yeltsin.[12] Such perceptions have roots in the contemporary realities of a weak state. As Putin's system gets weaker, Russians increasingly view it as continuous with Yelstin's. They appreciate and even romanticize the Soviet system because of their perception that it was able to deliver on its promises by demonstrating state paternalism and the ability to withstand pressures of special interests. Under the current system, Russians are frequently denied vital services of health and education. They tend to view the state as captured by corrupt and self-serving elites. In addition, they continue to aspire to be recognized by the outside world as a power capable of making independent decisions.

Reforming the current strong state system is a difficult undertaking that is going to require a visionary and committed leadership. Such leadership must be able to lay out strategic tasks and mobilization mechanisms for preserving Russia's semi-peripheral position in the global economy and then moving up to the core. To be successful, the Russian state cannot be satisfied with macroeconomic stability and management of inflation. Instead, it should be prepared to initialize new mechanisms of mobilization by addressing the central problem of its underdeveloped economy—a growing social and regional inequality. The current state of affairs, in which Russia's energy exports are turning the country into one of the least socially balanced in the world,[13] is not sustainable in the midterm perspective. A state of the core group, being in a position of global leadership, does not need to be concerned with the massive redistribution of income and the mobilization of its own population for development purposes. Such a state has an internationally dominant business class and a large group of well-educated and globally competitive professionals. It took its historical time to gradually reduce the gaps in income inequalities across the country. Russia, however, is not shielded from competition with the strongest and therefore is in a more difficult position to develop. It has no choice but to rely on state assistance in educating and retraining

its labor, correcting distorted regional imbalances, and developing comparative advantages in competition for the global technological age. Short of such a state mobilization, it risks becoming permanently situated on the global periphery—an area of exploitation by outsiders with no future for its own citizens.

If Russia is to preserve its semi-peripheral position, it must be led by a well-organized state. To successfully reform its governance, Russia must improve the quality of its elites, establish a transparent mechanism for transferring power, and open new channels for participation in politics by middle-class professionals. Improving the quality of elites depends less on material rewards than the formulation of new patriotic values. Elites in semi-peripheral countries are typically divided between those leaning toward the West and those advocating traditionalist and isolationist strategies. The system of patriotic values must not embrace the latter at the expense of the former but instead articulate those general attributes essential for state preservation regardless of the ideological position of a particular elite. Elites should be educated not only in the West but also in specially created national institutions promoted by the state.

Another urgent priority is establishing a mechanism for transferring power. Putin's "manual" control system needs to be replaced by one less dependent on personalities. The dualistic power structure, with Medvedev and Putin trading places, has assisted the country by integrating liberals, who place a greater emphasis on civil society and the rule of law, and conservatives, who are concerned with preserving stability, governance, and independence, within the elite circles. At the same time, the structure delayed the emergence of formal institutions. There are different ways to establish such institutions without radically disrupting established intra-elite ties and balances of power. For example, China formalized its transfer of power by limiting the office to two terms and extending the office to a candidate with confirmed credentials of the party's elite. Given Russia's need for strong executive and continuity in ruling, one can imagine a system with a longer presidential term—say, one term for ten years—and special nominations-primaries from most prominent elite groups, including the serving president, before presenting candidates for a nationally competitive vote.

Finally, the Russian state is mature enough to move its managed democracy to the next level by allowing unfiltered competition to fill seats in regional legislatures and the Federation Council. The current risk for Russia is to have too many loyalist voices and too few conservative or liberal opposition to the Kremlin. The current State Duma, for example, has a limited

presence of conservative parties and hardly any presence of liberals. Russia's new nationalists or pro-business parties remain unrepresented. A representative and politically diverse Duma is a necessity for a strong state as much as a loyal elite and a formalized transfer of power.

Tomorrow's Russia

It remains to be seen whether the current state in Russia is too conservative to implement serious reforms of its political system. The Russian ruling elite may or may not have learned the lessons of the December 2011 protests and the overall crisis of the system. Some observers predict further decline or even the disintegration of Russia's state before or after its next presidential elections in 2018.[14] But if the Russian history is a guide, the idea of a strong state will continue to be vital in the country's political discourse. A new, reformed state is not likely to resemble the old autocratic system with its features of information censorship, bound labor, and dynastical elections of the ruler. Nevertheless, Russia's executive power will be, without a doubt, stronger and less constrained than in the familiar competitive system.

If Russia is to continue with its "moment in world history,"[15] it will need to meet the challenge of adapting to the outside world by reforming rather than discarding its comparative advantages. The strong state model is one such advantage, but its successful implementation depends on the leadership's ability to offer a vision that is sensitive to its history and current tasks and that incorporates global and domestic opportunities for the nation. It also depends on building flexible and responsive institutions that are able to minimize political crises. Such institutions must not stifle freedom and initiative but instead steer those in the direction of the common good by overcoming partisanship, individualism, and disunity within the system. Presenting a strong state and pluralistic democracy as opposing, mutually exclusive trends is no longer viable and only does Russia a disservice. The two are complementary and mutually reinforcing: democracy cannot function without state protection, and the state depends on democracy for legitimacy and support. Such relationships are vital for managing social tensions and preventing extreme political developments.

Notes

CHAPTER 1

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CHAPTER 2

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12. Petro, *The Rebirth of Russian Democracy*, 33.
13. Serge Zenkovsky, "The Russian Church Shism," in *Readings in Russian Civilization*, Vol. 1, *Russia before Peter the Great, 900–1700*, 2nd ed., ed. Thomas Riha (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1969), 145.
14. Brian Taylor, *Politics and the Russian Army: Civil-Military Relations, 1689–2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
15. Marchall Poe, *The Russian Moment in World History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 66.

CHAPTER 3

1. As cited in S. P. Zhaba, *Russkiye mysliteli o Rossiyi i chelovechestve* (Paris: YMCA Press, 1954), 59.
2. Philip Longworth, *The Once and Future Empire from Pre-History to Putin* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2006), 16.

3. John M. Thompson, *Russia and the Soviet Union: An Historical Introduction from the Kievan State to the Present*, 6th ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2008), 12. It is possible that Eastern Slavs were invaded by Vikings armed with a superior nautical technology—the longship (Marshall T. Poe, *The Russian Moment in World History* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003], 17). Vikings called themselves "Rus'," which is a likely origin of the name "Russia." Russians continue to debate whether Vikings were of Swedish or Northern Slavic blood.
4. Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 83.
5. Ibid., 42.
6. Charles J. Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde: The Mongol Impact on Medieval Russian History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 127.
7. So tolerant seemed the Mongols that another theory, Eurasianism, claimed that the Mongol invasion in Russia never took place. Instead, the Russians supposedly entered a voluntary alliance with Mongols against the Teuton knights to save the Eastern Christian faith from the Western Catolic invadors. A good Western account of Eurasianism is Marlene Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism*: *An Ideology of Empire* (Washington, DC: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).
8. Iver B. Neumann, "Russia's Standing as a Great Power, 1494–1815," in *Russia's European Choice*, ed. Ted Hopf (London: Palgrave, 2008), 15.
9. As summarized by Peter Kennan, in Kurbskiy's view, "the tsar was 'bad' when he failed to heed the advice of his oligarchs, and 'good' when he took their counsel" (Edward L. Kennan, "Muskovite Political Folkways," *Russian Review* 45, no. 2 [1986]: 151).
10. The other territory—the *zemshchina* (land)—remained under the Duma's control.
11. Dominic Lieven, *Empire: The Russian Empire and Its Rivals* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 267.
12. Poe, *The Russian Moment*, 45.
13. S. F. Platonov, *Polnyi kurs lektsii po russkoi istoriyi* (Petrozavodsk: Petrozavodski universitet, 1996), 204. The historian Richard Hellie labeled this transformation the first service-class revolution or mobilization and militarization of Russian elites and all their resources to support a garrison state in response to external threats (Richard Hellie, "The Structure of Russian Imperial History," *History and Theory* 44 no. 4, [2005]).
14. Cited by Longworth, *The Once and Future Empire*, 129–130.
15. Nicholas V. Riazanovsky, *Nicholas I and Official Nationality in Russia, 1825–1855* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959).
16. Robert D. Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar: Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).
17. Until Peter the Great's rule, most serfs were selling themselves to the nobles to escape extreme poverty. In exchange for access to land and a national loan of cash,

they assumed a bonded service. Slavery then, as Richard Hellie wrote, had elements of a safety net or welfare system (Richard Hellie, *Slavery in Russia, 1450–1725* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982]).

18. William C. Fuller Jr., *Strategy and Power in Russia, 1600–1914* (New York: Free Press, 1992), 455.
19. Hendrik Spruyt, *Sovereign State and Its Competitors* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).
20. George Vernadsky, *A History of Russia* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1930), 4–5.
21. William C. Wohlforth, "Honor as Interest in Russian Decisions for War, 1600–1995," in *Honor Among Nations: Intangible Interests and Foreign Policy*, ed. Elliot Abrams (Washington, DC: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1998), 27.
22. Cited by Allen C. Lynch, *How Russia Is Not Ruled: Reflections on Russian Political Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 18.
23. "Alexander's Vision of the Future," in *Russia and the West from Peter to Khrushchev*, ed. L. Jay Oliva (Boston: D. C. Heath, 1965), 65.

CHAPTER 4

1. Dietrich Geyer, *Russian Imperialism: The Interaction of Domestic and Foreign Policy 1860–1914* (New York: Berg Publishers, 1987), 251.
2. William C. Fuller Jr., *Strategy and Power in Russia, 1600–1914* (New York: Free Press, 1992), 252.
3. I. V. Bestuzhev, *Krymskaya voina* (Moscow: Izd-vo Akademiia nauk SSSR, 1956), 11–13.
4. Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Vintage, 1986), 177.
5. For an example of cross-national comparisons of Russia and major European powers before the Crimean War, see David M. Goldfrank, *The Origins of the Crimean War* (London: Longman, 1994), 22, 37.
6. V. M. Khevrolina, "Preobrazovaniya v Rossiyi i vneshnyaya politika: vzaimosvyaz' i vzaimovliyaniye," in *Istoriya vneshnei politiki Rossiyi. Vtoraya polovina XIX veka*, ed. A. N. Sakharov (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnyye otnosheniya, 1997), 23.
7. Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire, 1552–1917* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 190.
8. Fuller, *Strategy and Power*, 274.
9. Dale C. Copeland, *The Origins of Major War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000).
10. Geyer, *Russian Imperialism*, 150–151.
11. S. M. Bushuyev, *A. M. Gorchakov* (Moscow: Izd-vo In-ta mezhdunarodnykh otnoshenenii, 1961), 78.

12. Pavel A. Khromov, *Economicheskoye razvitiye Rossiyi* (Moscow: Nauka, 1967), 284.
13. As a result, the rate of accidents at work was very high (ibid., 316–317).
14. David MacLaren McDonald, *United Government and Foreign Policy in Russia, 1900–1914* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 80.
15. Sergei Yu. Witte, *Izbrannyye vospominaniya 1849–1911* (Moscow: Mysl,' 1991), 415.
16. Astrid S. Tuminez, *Russian Nationalism since 1856: Ideology and the Making of Foreign Policy* (Lanham, MD: Rawman & Littlefield, 2000), 79.
17. Geyer, *Russian Imperialism*, 251, 256.
18. Vladimir Kokovtsev, *Iz moyego proshlogo. Vospominaniya 1903–1919*, Vol. 2 (Moscow: Nauka, 1992), 96.
19. Witte's approach to Japan was different and was based on a program of *expansion pacifique* in Asia (for details on Witte's perspective, see David Van Der Oye Schimmelpenninck, *Toward the Rising Sun: Russian Ideologies of Empire and the Path to War with Japan* [DeKalb: Northern University of Illinois Press, 2001], 61–81).
20. V. I. Bovykin, *Ocherki istoriyi vneshnei politiki Rossiyi. Konets XIX veka-1917 god* (Moscow: Uchebno-pedagogicheskoye izdaniye ministerstva prosvescheniya RSFSR, 1960), 59.
21. Iver B. Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe: A Study in Identity and International Relations* (London: Routledge, 1996), 82.
22. Geyer, *Russian Imperialism*, 278.
23. Fuller, *Strategy and Power in Russia*, 462.
24. Richard Pipes, *A Concise History of the Russian Revolution* (New York: Vintage, 1995), 18.

CHAPTER 5

1. As cited in Richard Sakwa, *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Union, 1917–1991* (London: Routledge, 1999), 187–188.
2. Vladimir Lenin's remarks at the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of Soviets, in Ronald Grigor Suny, ed., *The Structure of the Soviet History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 70. Bosheviks received 25% of the vote and seats relative to a more impressive performance by the Left Socialist Revolutionary Party, which received 40%.
3. Robert H. Donaldson and Joseph L. Nogee, *The Foreign Policy of Russia: Changing Systems, Enduring Interests* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1998), 37.
4. Craig B. Nation, *Black Earth, Red Star: A History of Soviet Security Policy, 1917–1991* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 42.
5. For details, see Andrei P. Tsygankov, *Russia and the West from Alexander to Putin: Honor in International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 155–163.
6. The estimate is that of Alexander Yakovlev's Commission of the Glasnost era (Kennedy-Pipe, *Russia and the World*, 24).

7. Jon Jacobson, *When the Soviet Union Entered World Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 21.
8. Adam B. Ulam, *Expansion and Coexistence: Soviet Foreign Policy, 1917–1973*, 2nd ed. (New York: Praeger, 1974), 165.
9. Churchill, "The Iron Curtain Speech," *The Origins of the Cold War, 1941–1947: A Historical Problem with Interpretations and Documents*, ed. Walter LaFeber (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1971).
10. For analysis of the United States' inflated assessments of the Soviet threat after the war, see Matthew A. Evangelista, "Stalin's Postwar Army Reappraised," *International Security* 7, no. 3 (1982–1983).
11. Walter LaFeber, *America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945–1966* (New York: Wiley, 1967), 20.
12. According to Robert Tucker, Stalin's modernization "was in essence an accelerated repetition of this tsarist developmental pattern" (Robert C. Tucker, *Political Culture and Leadership in Soviet Russia: From Lenin to Gorbachev* [Brighton, UK: Wheatsheaf Books, 1987], 89).
13. Alec Nove, *An Economic History of the U.S.S.R* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1969), 293.
14. LaFeber, *America, Russia, and the Cold War*, 28.
15. V. M. Zubok and Konstantin Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War*: *From Stalin to Khrushchev* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 31.
16. Zagladin, *Istoriya uspekhov i neudach*, 59.
17. As cited in Sanjoy Banerjee, "Attribution, Identity, and Emotion in the Early Cold War," *International Studies Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (1991): 30.
18. The initial argument about continuity between the old and new Russia was formulated by Nikolaï Berdyayev, *Istoki i smysl russkogo kommunizma* (Parizh, Russia: YMCA Press, 1956).
19. Nation, *Black Earth*, 38–39.
20. Jacobson, *When the Soviet Union Entered*, 19.
21. Nove, *An Economic History of the U.S.S.R.*, 150–151. One pood is 16 kilograms.
22. Boris Kagarlitski, *Periferiynaya imperiya*, *rassiya i mirosistema* (Moscow: Ultra-Kultura, 2004), 424.
23. Graham Smith, *The Post-Soviet States: Mapping the Politics of Transition* (London: Arnold, 1999), 18.
24. William Wohlforth, *The Elusive Balance: Power and Perception During the Cold War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 48.
25. Lennart Samuelson, *Plans for Stalin's War Mashine: Tukhachevskii and Military-Economic Planning, 1925–1941* (London: Macmillan, 2000), 202.
26. For a summary statistics, see David Stone, *Hammer and Rifle: The Militarization of the Soviet Union, 1926–1933* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000), 217.
27. Robert C. Tucker, *Stalin in Power: The Revolution from Above, 1928–1941* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1992), 481.

28. The Comintern was established in 1919 to spread communist ideas and set up new communist parties abroad.
29. The terms of "socialist" and "democratic imperialism" come from Zubok and Gaddis, respectively (Vladislav M. Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2009], chap. 2; John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997], 284, 289).
30. Yegor Gaidar, *Gibel' imperiyi*, 2nd ed. (Moscow: Rosspen, 2007), 179–180.
31. Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Soviet Experiment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 436.
32. Smith, *The Post-Soviet States*, 22.
33. By 1991, 60% of the Soviet hard currency earnings came from exports of oil and gas (Daniel Yergin, *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money and Power* [New York: Free Press, 2003], 780).
34. John Bushnell, "The 'New Soviet Man' Turns Pessimist," in *The Structure of the Soviet History: Essays and Documents*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).
35. Robert C. Tucker, *Stalin as a Revolutionary, 1879–1929: A Study in History and Personality* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1973), 371–372.
36. Six hundred square meters.
37. M. Harrison, "Economic Growth and Slowdown," in *Brezhnev Reconsidered*, eds. Edwin Bacon and Mark Sandle (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 45.

CHAPTER 6

1. Jack F. Matlock, *Autopsy of an Empire: The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (New York : Random House, 1995), as cited in Robert H. Donaldson and Joseph L. Nogee, *The Foreign Policy of Russia* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1998), 105.
2. Robert D. English, *Russia and the Idea of the West: Gorbachev, Intellectuals, and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 200, 323n31. The official Soviet figures were 8.1% for 1975 and 4.6% for 1984 as quoted in Yanos Kornai, *The Socialist System: The Political Economy of Communism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 137.
3. For development of the argument about rise of the Soviet middle class, see especially Moshe Lewin, *The Gorbachev Phenomenon: A Historical Interpretation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).
4. John Bushnell, "The 'New Soviet Man' Turns Pessimist," in *The Structure of Soviet History: Essays and Documents*, ed. R. G. Suny (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).
5. Mikhail Gorbachev, *Dekabr' 1991: Moya pozitsiya* (Moscow: Novosti, 1992), 175–176.

6. David Kotz and Fred Weir, *Revolution from Above: The Demise of the Soviet System* (London: Routeldge, 1997), 147.
7. In public Gorbachev denied responsibility by putting the blame on his defense minister, Dmitri Yazov.
8. See especially Martin Malia, "To the Stalin's Mausolium," *Daedalus* 119, no. 1 (1990).
9. For an example, see Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, "Power, Globalization, and the End of the Cold War: Reevaluating a Landmark Case for Ideas," *International Security* 25, no. 3, Winter (2000–2001).
10. Michael Ellman and Vladimir Kontorovich, eds., *The Disintegration of the Soviet Economic System* (London: Routledge, 1992); Vladimir Kontorovich, "Economists, Soviet Growth Slowdown and the Collapse," *Europe-Asia Studies* 53, no. 5 (2001).
11. Stephen Sestanovich, "Invention of Soviet National Interest," *National Interest* 20 (1990).
12. Some scholars argued that Gorbachev's initial rationale for revolutionizing foreign policy by removing ideology from its central position had less to do with engaging the outside world than with his attempts to win a power struggle against his ideologically driven opponents in the Party and the military (Anthony D'Agostino, *Gorbachev's Revolution* [New York: New York University Press, 1998]).
13. Yuri Levada, ed., *Est' mneniye! Itogi sotsiologicheskogo oprosa* (Moscow: Progress, 1990), 280, 288.

CHAPTER 7

1. "Former President Yeltsin Dies," RFE/RL Newsline, April 24, 2007, http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1143858.html
2. Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?" *National Interest* 16, Summer (1989).
3. William Pfaff, "Redefining World Power," *Foreign Affairs* 70, 1 (1991): 48.
4. Leonid Gordon and Leonid Fridman, "Rossiya—velikaya derzhava vtorogo ranga," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, April 4, 1995.
5. This expression was in wide circulation among Russian reformers at the time and is frequently attributed to the architect of the shock therapy, Yegor Gaidar.
6. David Kotz and Fred Weir, *Revolution from Above: The Demise of the Soviet System* (London: Routledge, 1997), 167.
7. John P. Willerton, Mikhail Beznosov, and Martin Carrier, "Addressing the Challenges of Russia's 'Failing State,'" *Demokratizatsiya* 13, no. 2 (2005).
8. As cited in George Breslauer, *Gorbachev and Yeltsin as Leaders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 157.
9. Zbigniew Brzezinski, "The Premature Partnership," *Foreign Affairs* 73, no. 1 (1994).
10. Vladimir Sogrin, "Zapadnyi liberalizm i rossiyskiye reformy," *Svobodnaya mysl'* 1 (1996): 32.

11. Ibid.
12. "The Need for a New Ostpolitik," *Financial Times*, January 16, 1996.
13. Richard Sakwa, *Russian Politics and Society*, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 2002), 294.
14. According to Russia's official statistics, the overall capital flight during that period was $182 billion, whereas the amount of foreign assistance constituted $174 billion (Ivan Korolev, "Integratsiya Rossiyi v mirovuyu ekonomiku," *Pro et Contra* 6, nos. 1–2 [2001]: 76).
15. Sakwa, *Russian Politics and Society*, 216.
16. For documentation of Russia's human rights violations, see especially reports by Human Rights Watch, available at http://hrw.org. For a balanced account that includes analysis of Chechen conduct of war, see Alexander Cherkasov and Dmitri Grushkin, "The Chechen Wars and the Struggle for Human Rights," in *Chechnya: From Past to Future*, ed. Richard Sakwa (London: Pinter, 2006), 131–156.
17. Jacob W. Kipp, "Putin and Russia's War in Chechnya," in *Putin's Russia: Past Imperfect, Future Uncertain*, ed. Dale R. Herspring (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 222.
18. The text of the agreement is available in Ronald Grigor Suny, ed., *The Structure of Soviet History: Essays and Documents* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 529–530.
19. By official Russian estimates, more than 1,000 hostages were taken between 1997 and 1999 and kidnappers reportedly received up to $20 million in ransom money only in 1998 (Nabi Abdullaev, "Chechnya Ten Years Later," *Current History* 103, no. 675 [October 2004]: 335; Dmitri Trenin, *The End of Eurasia: Russia on the Border between Geopolitics and Globalization* [Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2001], 198).
20. Julie Wilhelmsen, "Between a Rock and a Hard Place: The Islamization of the Chechen Separatist Movement," *Europe-Asia Studies* 57, no. 1 (January 2005): 39.
21. Lieven, "What Is the Future of Chechnya?" in *Russia after the Fall*, ed. Andrew C. Kuchins (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2002), 247.
22. As two analysts recommended in the mainstream journal *Foreign Affairs*, the United States had to encourage a "settlement in which the West plays a major role" (Rajan Menon and Graham E. Fuller, "Russia's Ruinous Chechen War," *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2000, 44).
23. Mike Bowker, "Western Views of the Chechen Conflict," in *Chechnya: From Past to Future*, ed. Richard Sakwa (London: Pinter, 2006).
24. "Boris Yeltsin," *Washington Post*, April 24, 2007; "Yeltsin's Russia," *Wall Street Journal*, April 24, 2007.
25. "Gorbachev Russia's Most Unpopular Leader—Survey," *RIA Novosti*, February 2, 2012.

26. Whereas members of Yeltsin's team Alexander Voloshin and Boris Berezovsky valued Putin as capable to ensure their protection from their prosecution, Yeltsin seems to have selected the successor with higher goals in mind. In his memoirs, Yeltsin explained his choice: "I sensed that the society needed a new state, a steel axis which would strengthen the whole political construction of power." Yelstin saw in Putin a person who was intelligent but also "tough in the military sense" and capable of addressing "the weakening of the state, the weakening of security services and the army which followed the Soviet breakup" (Boris Yeltsin, *Presidentski maraphon: Razmyshleniya, vospominaniya, vpechatleniya* [Moscow: AST, 2000], http://www.lib.ru/MEMUARY/ELCIN/marafon.txt).

CHAPTER 8

1. Vladimir Putin, "Rossiya na rubezhe tysyacheletiy," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, December 30, 1999.
2. Richard Rose, "How Floating Parties Frustrate Democratic Accountability," in *Contemporary Russian Politics*, ed. Archie Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 221–222.
3. Andrea Crandall, "Invest in China? Invest in Russia," Johnson's Russia List, April 19, 2006,
4. *RIA Novosti*, March 9, 2010.
5. Putin, "Rossiya na rubezhe tysyacheletiy." In Putin's most revealing words, "If by democracy one means the dissolution of the state, then we do not need such democracy" (Interview, *Washington Post*, September 26, 2003).
6. Vladimir Putin, "Poslaniye Prezidenta Federal'nomu Sobraniyu Rossiyskoy Federatsii," *Mezhdunarodnaya zhizn'* 5 (2002): 3–11.
7. Vladimir Putin, "Poslaniye Prezidenta Federal'nomu Sobraniyu Rossiyskoy Federatsii," May 16, 2003, http://president.kremlin.ru.
8. The cited reason was Mironov's increasingly oppositional stance and refusal to support Putin for president if nominated by the UR. The Kremlin had originally planned for the Fair Russia to compete with the Communists, not the UR.
9. Petrov and Slider, "The Regions under Putin and After," 77.
10. "Putin Says Russia Faces 'Total War' with Terrorism," RFE/RL Newsline, September 7, 2004, http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1143237.html.
11. For a more detailed analysis of the US policies and perceptions of Russia's role in Chechnya, see Anatol Lieven, "What Is the Future of Chechnya?" in *Russia after the Fall*, ed. Andrew C. Kuchins (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2002); Andrei P. Tsygankov, *Russophobia: Anti-Russian Lobby and American Foreign Policy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), chap. 4.
12. Vladimir Frolov, "Could Chechnya Be a Model for Iraq?," *Russia Profile Weekly Expert Panel*, May 31, 2006.
13. Dmitri Medvedev, "Go Russia!," September 10, 2009, http://eng.kremlin.ru/transcripts/298.

14. In his address to the Federation Council in November 2009, Medvedev further insisted that the effectiveness of foreign policy must be "judged by a simple criterion: Does it improve living standards in our country?" (Dmitri Medvedev, Address to Federation Council of the Russian Federation, November 12, 2009, http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2009/11/12/1321_type70029type82912_222702.shtml).
15. Michael Stott, "Witness: Russia's Unhappy Flirtation with Reform," Reuters, September 27, 2011, http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/09/27/us-witness-russia-idUSTRE78Q1YO20110927.
16. Vladimir Putin, "Prime Minister Vladimir Putin Address to Duma" [Video], April 20, 2011, http://www.c-span.org/video/?299134-1/prime-minister-vladimir-putin-address-duma.
17. Tai Adelaja, "Competitive Constraints. A New Report Says Russia Is Losing the Global Battle for the Hearts and Minds of Investors," *Russia Profile*, September 8, 2011.
18. Andrew E. Kramer, "For Investors, Russia's Putin Is Good for Business," *New York Times*, September 28, 2011.
19. See, for example, Konstantin Zatulin's letter published in *Moskovskiy komsomolets*, March 21, 2012.

CHAPTER 9

1. Vladimir Putin, "Poslaniye Prezidenta Federal'nomu Sobraniyu Rossiyskoi Federatsiyi," *Mezhdunarodnaya zhizn'* 5 (2002): 4–5.
2. Alexander Gerschenkon, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962).
3. Vladimir Putin, "Rossiya na rubezhe tysyacheletiya," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, December 30, 1999.
4. William C. Wohlforth, "Russia," in *Strategic Asia 2002–03*, eds. Richard J. Ellings and Aaron L. Friedberg (Seattle, WA: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2003), 199.
5. Vladimir Putin, "Mineral Natural Resources in the Strategy for Development of the Russian Economy," *Problems of Post-Communism* 53, no. 1 (2006): 51–52.
6. Ibid., 52.
7. Ibid., 51.
8. "Regardless of whose property the natural resources and in particular the mineral resources might be, the state has the right to regulate the process of their development and use, acting in the interests of society as a whole and of individual property owners, whose interests come into conflict with each other" (ibid., 52).
9. "Development of this sector of the economy will facilitate raising the level of well-being of the population and diminish social tensions" (ibid., 51).
10. See, for example, Eric Helleiner and Andreas Pickel, eds. *Economic Nationalism in a Globalizing World* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005); Adam

Harmes, "The Rise of Neoliberal Nationalism," *Review of International Political Economy* 19, no. 1 (2012).

11. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds., *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), 85.
12. Richard Hellie, "The Structure of Russian Imperial History," *History and Theory* 44, no. 4 (2005).
13. Andrei Soldatov and Irina Borogan, *The New Nobility: The Restoration of Russia's Security State and the Enduring Legacy of the KGB* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2010), 5.
14. Ol'ga Kryshtanovskaya and Stephen White, "The Sovietization of Russian Politics," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 25, no. 4 (2009): 295.
15. This and next section partly draw on my previous work, Andrei P. Tsygankov, *Russophobia: Anti-Russian Lobby and American Foreign Policy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), chap. 7.
16. On Russian oligarchs and oil wealth, see sources listed in chapter 7. See also David F. Hoffman, *The Oligarchs, Wealth, and Power in the New Russia* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2002).
17. "Russia Turns from Debtor into Creditor Country—Medvedev," *Itar-Tass*, January 27, 2007; Guy Chazan, "Lighting a Spark: Fueled by Oil Money, Russian Economy Soars," *Wall Street Journal*, March 13, 2007.
18. Peter Rutland, "Putin and the Oligarchs," in *Putin's Russia: Past Imperfect, Future Uncertain*, ed. Dale R. Herspring (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 148.
19. Gerald M. Easter, "Revenue Imperatives: State over Market in Postcommunist Russia," in *The Political Economy of Russia*, ed. Neil Robinson (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013), 61.
20. Seth Myrdans and Erin E. Arvedlund, "Police in Russia Seize Oil Tycoon," *New York Times*, October 26, 2003.
21. Standard Schaefer, "Russia: Reforming the Reformers: An Interview with Michael Hudson," *Counterpunch*, February 27–March 1, 2004, http://www.counterpunch.org/schaefer02272004.html.
22. F. William Engdahl, "The Emerging Russian Giant," *Asia Times Online*, October 24–25, 2006.
23. He stated so in an interview given to *Nezavisimaya gazeta* in 1997, quoted in Hudson, "Russia: Reforming the Reformers."
24. Timothy L. O'Brien, "How Russian Oil Tycoon Courted Friends in U.S.," *New York Times*, November 5, 2003; Hudson, "Russia: Reforming the Reformers."
25. Some experts said that Yukos was preparing for a merger with ExxonMobil at a price of $22 billion—clearly less than the company's actual value. Julietto Kieza, "Kholodnaya voina nachinayetsya," *Rossiya*, February 15, 2007.
26. Engdahl, "The Emerging Russian Giant."

27. Stephen F. Cohen, "The Struggle for Russia," *Nation*, November 24, 2003. For similar reaction, see Joseph Stiglitz, "Nalog ha russkikh oligarkhov," *Russki zhurnal*, December 23, 2003.
28. Padma Desai, *Conversations on Russia: Reform from Yeltsin to Putin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).
29. "Obzor vneshnei politiki Rossiyskoi federatsiyi," March 27, 2007, http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/3647DA97748A106BC32572AB002AC4DD.
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Russia's economic development," Valdai Discussion Club, November 6, 2012, http://valdaiclub.com/economy/50940.html).

CHAPTER 10

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4. Henry E. Hale, "The Myth of Mass Russian Support for Autocracy: Public Opinion Foundations of a Hybrid Regime," *Europe-Asia Studies* 63, no. 8 (October 2011); Henry E. Hale, "Trends in Russian Views on Democracy 2008–12: Has There Been a Russian Democratic Awakening?" *Russian Analytical Digest* 117 (September 19, 2012).
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19. For analyses of these developments, see Peter J. S. Duncan, "Russia, the West and the 2007–2008 Electoral Cycle: Did the Kremlin Really Fear a 'Coloured Revolution?'" *Europe-Asia Studies* 65, no. 1 (2013).
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23. Vladimir Putin, "Poslaniye Federal'nomu Sobraniyu Rossiyskoy Federatsiyi," May 10, 2006, http://archive.kremlin.ru/appears/2006/05/10/1357_type63372type63374type82634_105546.shtml; Vladimir Putin, "Poslaniye Federal'nomu Sobraniyu Rossiyskoy Federatsiyi," April 26, 2007, http://www.rg.ru/2007/04/27/poslanie.html.
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31. "Poll: Order More Important than Democracy, Russians Say," Interfax, August 9, 2011.
32. Hale, "Trends in Russian Views on Democracy 2008–12," 14.
33. Tai Adelaja, "Post Imperial Fatigue," *Russia Profile*, June 27, 2011.

34. Ibid. Similar findings were reported by the Levada-Center, according to which only 5% of Russians responded positively to the question whether there is democracy in Russia while 39% that there is only a partial democracy, 32% that democracy has not taken root, and 20% that there is less and less democracy. "Russians Are Sure Russia Will Develop But Follow Its Own Way: : Poll," Interfax, February 19, 2012.
35. "Russians Back Protests, Political Freedoms and Putin, Too," Pew Global Attitudes Project, May 23, 2012, http://www.pewglobal.org/2012/05/23/russians-back-protests-political-freedoms-and-putin-too/.
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37. Graeme Robertson, "Russian Protesters: Not Optimistic But Here to Stay," *Russian Analytical Digest* 115 (June 20, 2012): 5.
38. Freedom House is especially known for such assessments of Russia since 2005. For analysis of the Freedom House's ratings of democracy, see Andrei P. Tsygankov and David Parker, "The Securitization of Democracy," manuscript under review.
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3. Iver B. Neumann, *Uses of the Other* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998); Martin Malia, *Russia under Western Eyes: From the Bronze Horseman to the Lenin Mausoleum* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).
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6. Vladimir Putin, *Poslaniye Federal'nomu Sobraniyu Rossiyskoy Federatsiyi*, May 16, 2003, http://archive.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2003/05/44623.shtml.
7. For details, see Andrei P. Tsygankov, *Russia's Foreign Policy*, 3rd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013), chap. 5.
8. Vladimir Putin, "Poslaniye Prezidenta Federal'nomu Sobraniyu Rossiyskoi Federatsiyi," *Mezhdunarodnaya zhizn'* 5 (2002): 4–5.
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11. Vladimir Putin, *Vystupleniye na soveschaniyi "O perspektivakh razvitiya Dal'nego Vostoka i Zabaikalya," Blagoveschensk*, July 21, 2000, http://2002.kremlin.ru/events/50.html.
12. Vladimir Putin, "The New Integration Project for Eurasia," *Izvestia*, October 3, 2011.
13. Sergei Ivanov, "Triada natsional'nykh tsennostei," *Izvestia*, July 14, 2006.
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16. "Obzor vneshnei politiki Rossiyskoi federatsiyi," March 27, 2007, http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/3647DA97748A106BC32572AB002AC4DD.
17. For details, see Tsygankov, *Russia's Foreign Policy*, chap. 6.
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19. "Russia considers the reset to have fostered significant concessions to the United States," writes Andranik Migranyan. . . . These include the compromise on Libya, the help in Afghanistan and the pressure on Iran" (Andranik Migranyan, "How Russia Views the Reset," *National Interest*, November 24, 2011). "What did Russia get in return [for its concessions]?" echoes Alexei Pushkov. "Nothing but changes in nuances of the dialogue. There are more smiles and handshakes now than there

were before" (Aleksei Pushkov, "Under-Reload: Moscow Delivers, Washington Stalls," *Argumenty i Fakty* 1 [January 2011]).

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5. Ibid., 111–112.
6. Ibid., 113.
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11. Alexei Navalny, "O Surkove, nytikakh, murzilkakh i nikaraguanskoi razvedke," *RBC*, May 14, 2013, http://top.rbc.ru/society/14/05/2013/857436.shtml.
12. For analysis and assessment of the middle class, see Thomas F. Remington, "The Russian Middle Class as a Policy Objective," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 27, no. 2 (2011).
13. Debra Javeline and Sarah Lindermann-Komarova, "Rethinking Russia: A Balanced Assessment of Russian Civil Society," *Journal of International*

Affairs 63, no. 2 (Spring–Summer 2010), http://jia.sipa.columbia.edu/balanced-assessment-russian-civil-society.

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26. Graeme Gill, "The Decline of a Dominant Party and the Destabilization of Electoral Authoritarianism?," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 28, no. 4 (October–December 2012).
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CHAPTER 13

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4. As Geoffrey Hosking wrote, "Annexed territories became full components of the empire as soon as practicable" (Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire, 1552–1917* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997], 40).
5. Since Catherine the Great, Russians even served as arbitrator in disputes between Muslims from the Volga River to Central Asia. See Robert D. Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar: Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).
6. Dzhabrail Gakayev, "Chechnya in Russia and Russia in Chechnya," in *Chechnya: From Past to Future*, ed. Richard Sakwa (London: Anthem Press, 2005).
7. According to polls, a majority of Russians associate immigrants with crime and want the number to be reduced. See, for example, "Number Of Russians Hostile to Other Nationals Increased to 50%," Interfax, October 16, 2012; "Russia: Recent Polls Show Growing Patriotism, Anti-Immigrant Sentiment," *RIA Novosti*, November 28, 2012.
8. During the same time the number of churches has multiplied to thirty thousand and the number of monasteries increased from eighteen to seven hundred, and the Orthodox Church is frequently identified as the most trusted institution in the country (Dmitry Solovyov and Oleg Shchedrov, "Russians Bid Farewell to Patriarch at Grand Funeral," Reuters, December 9, 2008, http://www.reuters.com/article/2008/12/09/us-russia-patriarch-idUSTRE4B822020081209).
9. Vera Tolz, *Russia: Inventing the Nation* (Oxford: Arnold, 2001), 250.
10. Polls indicated that at the time most Russians supported voluntary reunification of the ex-Soviet republics with Russia (Andrei P. Tsygankov, *Russia's Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity*, 3rd ed. (Lanham, MD: [Rowman & Littlefield, 2013], chap. 3).
11. Igor Zevelev, *Russia and Its New Diaspora* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2001), 175.
12. In particular, Kirill endorsed the recent influential volume *Russkaya doktrina* (Moscow: Yauza, 2007) that argued the need to restore imperial self-sufficiency and Russia's geopolitical status as the Eurasian Heartland. On role of the Russian Orthodox Church in nation-building, see Igor Zevelev, "Russia's Future: Nation or Civilization?," *Russia in Global Affairs* 4 (October–December 2009).
13. Howard Amos, "Guilty Verdict Puts the Heat on Putin," *Moscow Times*, August 20, 2012.
14. "Forty-Four Percent of Russians Support Pussy Riot Trial," *Kommersant*, August 17, 2012.

15. Marlene Laruelle, "'Natsdem': The New Wave of Anti-Putin Nationalists," *PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo* 223 (September 2012).
16. Vladimir Putin, "Samoopredeleniye russkogo naroda—eto polietnicheskaya tsivilizatsiya, skreplennaya russkim kul'turnym yadrom," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, January 23, 2012.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Dmitri Rogozin, "Russki otvet Vladimiru Putinu," *Izvestia*, January 31, 2012.
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23. Putin, "Samoopredeleniye russkogo naroda."
24. Ibid.
25. Natalya Gorodetskaya, "Russkiy narod probuyetsya na obyedinyayushchuyu rol'," *Kommersant*, October 10, 2012. The new strategy was written, among other authors, by Tishkov, whose thinking has shifted since the early 1990s from the civic nation ideology to that of state-civilization. On Muslim opposition, see Charles Clover, "Russian 'Civilization' Stirs Resentment," *Financial Times*, December 12, 2012.
26. Vladimir Putin, "Address at the Plenary Session of the Russian Federation Ambassadors," Moscow, Foreign Ministry, July 12, 2004, http://archive.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2004/07/74399.shtml
27. Vladimir Putin, "Meeting with the Russian Federation Ambassadors," Moscow, Foreign Ministry, July 9, 2012, http://www.kremlin.ru/transcripts/15902.
28. For details of such criticisms, see Andrei P. Tsygankov, "Russia in the Post-Western World: The End of the Normalization Paradigm?," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 25, no. 4 (2009).
29. Andrei P. Tsygankov, *Whose World Order? Russia's Response to American Ideas after the Cold War* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004).
30. Sergei Lavrov, "Russia and the World in the 21st Century," *Russia in Global Affairs* 3 (2008).

31. Mikhail Remizov et al., "Karta religioznykh ugroz. Severny Kavkaz i Povolzhye," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, June 4, 2013.
32. Vera Al'perovich and Nataliya Yudina, "Pravoradikal raspravil plechi," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, February 19, 2014.
33. Ekaterina Trifonova, "Migrantam otkryli novoye okno v Rossiyu," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, February 20, 2014.
34. Konstantin Zatulin, "Chtoby pravil'no zadat' vopros, nado znat' bol'shuyu chast' otveta," *Izvestia*, January 25, 2012.
35. Fyodor Lukyanov, "Putin Outlines His Moral Vision for Modern Russia," Russia Beyond the Headlines, December 18, 2012, http://rbth.asia/articles/2012/12/18/putin_outlines_his_moral_vision_for_modern_russia_21087.html.

CHAPTER 14

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3. Paul T. Christensen, "Russia as Semiperiphery: Political Economy, the State, and Society in the Contemporary World System," in *The Political Economy of Russia*, ed. Neil Robinson (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013).
4. Alena V. Ledeneva, *Can Russia Modernize? Sistema, Power Networks and Informal Governance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
5. William Partlett, "Putin's Artful Jurisprudence," *National Interest*, January–February 2013.
6. Richard Sakwa, "Systemic Stalemate: *Reiderstvo* and the Dual State," in *The Political Economy of Russia*, ed. Neil Robinson (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012).
7. Louise Shelley, "Crime, Organized Crime, and Corruption," in *Return to Putin's Russia*, 5th ed., ed. Stephan K. Wegren (Boulder, CO: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013), 190.
8. See chapter 9.
9. Oleg Shvartsman, "Partiyu dlya nas olitsetvoryayet silovoi blok," *Kommersant*, November 30, 2007.
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11. Sergei Kulikov, "Siloviki sdelali Rossiyu chempionom po vzyatkam," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, October 12, 2008. For a critique of measurements and ratings of corruption by various agencies, see Alena Ledeneva, "Corruption in Postcommunist Societies in Europe: A Re-Examination," *Perspectives on European Politics and Society* 10, no. 1 (2009).

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